Kundalini Tantra

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Swami Niranjan

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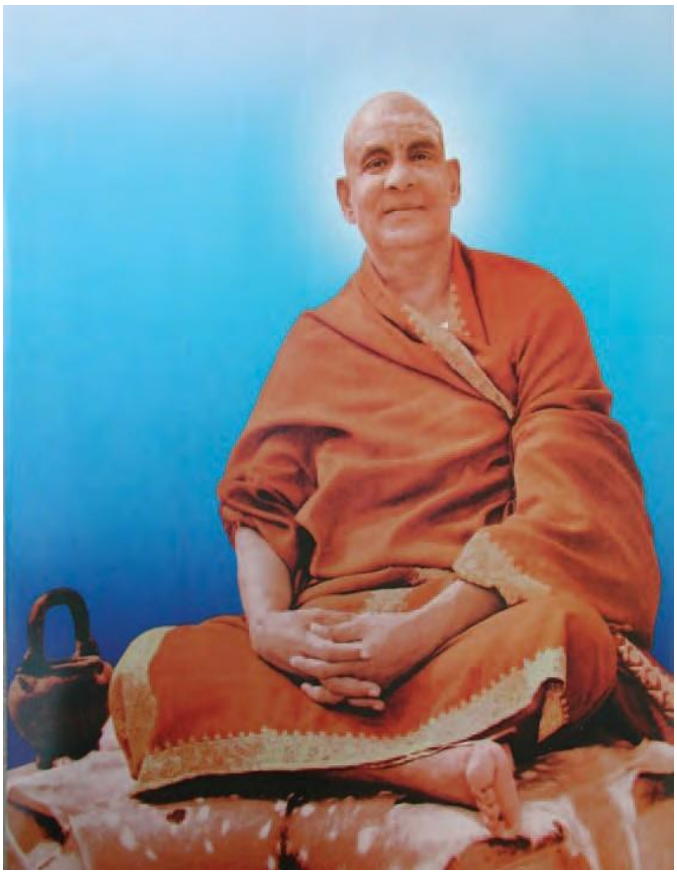

Dedication

In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.

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Introduction to Kundalini and Tantra

I have been travelling the world for the last three decades in order to pass on the message of yoga, and I find that yoga has influenced the course of human thinking tremendously. Initially of course, there was some doubt about it as many people thought that yoga was a type of religion, witchcraft or mysticism. This particularly happened because man believed matter was the ultimate point in the evolution of nature. The materialistic world did not understand yoga for some time, but as scientists dived deep into the mysteries of matter, they came to understand and realize that matter was not the ultimate in the evolution of nature.

If that is so for one form of matter, it applies to every form of matter. This external experience, the perception you have through your senses, is a product of matter. Even your6 thoughts, feelings, emotions and cognitions are products of matter. Therefore, they cannot be absolute and final. This means there must be another realm of experience, and if there is another realm of experience, it must be possible to transcend the present limitations of the mind.

The mind is also matter; it is definitely not spirit. Therefore, the mind can also be transformed and made to evolve. Many people have begun to realize and experience this fact in the last few decades. In my opinion, this marks the end of one era and the beginning of another. For those who have some knowledge of science and the nature of matter, it is not difficult to understand exactly what inner experience is.

An inner experience is the manifestation of a deeper level of oneself. Dream, of course, is an experience. Your dreams may be schizophrenic, but that is an expression of your own self. Thought is also a concept or expression of your own self. A piece of music is an expression of your self, whether you compose it or just admire it. A painting or sculpture is a concept of your self whether you create it or just admire it. That means the external world is a manifestation of your inner experience, and you can improve this experience to any extent. You can also bring about deterioration of this experience. When everything is hopeless outside, that is your experience of yourself, and if everything is beautiful outside, that is also your experience of yourself.

In the last few decades, yoga has helped millions of people to improve their selfconcept. Yoga realizes that man is not only the mind, but the body as well. Therefore, one does not experience happiness only through the mind. The body is also real and it is a part of one's personality. Just improving the condition of the body, however, will not necessarily enable the mind to experience happiness either. This is because man is not only the body and mind, but emotion and desire as well. He is something beyond the mind or psyche. Therefore, yoga has been designed in such a way that it can complete the process of evolution of the personality in every possible direction. That is why yoga has so many branches – hatha yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga, jnana yoga, kundalini yoga, and so on.

A combined, integrated practice of yoga in one's life will definitely ensure a better quality of experience within you and without. Every seeker and practitioner on the path of yoga must remember that the various paths of yoga are to improve the quality of head, heart and hands. However, yoga does not end with the development of the personality. One level of the personality is dependent on this mind, this body and these emotions, but there is another deeper part of the personality which you have to develop with another kind of mind and emotion. This requires a special process, and that process is known as kundalini yoga.

Objective experience is not the ultimate

Kundalini yoga is a part of the tantric tradition. Although you may have already been introduced to yoga, it is also necessary for you to know something about tantra. Since ancient times, the wise have realized that the mind can be expanded and that experiences do not necessarily depend on an object. This means that if somebody is playing music, I can hear it, and if somebody has painted a picture, I can see it, but I can also see if there is no picture, and I can hear if there is no music. This is also a quality of the personality which has been ignored in the last one hundred and fifty to two hundred years.

Tantra says that the range of mental experience can be broadened. With the help of the senses, your mind can have an experience based on an object. There can be an experience within the framework of time, space and object, but there can also be an experience beyond the framework of time, space and object. The second form of experience can happen when the present mind expands beyond its given definitions and borders, and when this experience occurs, energy is released from yourself.

For hundreds of years, people have been talking about an experience called nirvana, moksha, emancipation, self-realization, salvation or liberation, without understanding it properly. Yogis call this experience samadhi. Although many people think that in samadhi or nirvana everything is completely finished, it is definitely not a process of quitting the world. Nothing finishes, only one level of experience ends, but then a6nother begins.

Since the dawn of creation, the tantrics and yogis have realized that in this physical body there is a potential force. It is not psychological, philosophical or transcendental; it is a dynamic potential force in the material body, and it is called kundalini. This kundalini is the greatest discovery of tantra and yoga. Scientists have begun to look into this, and a summary of some of the latest scientific experiments is included in this book.

We can see from this research that science is not actually going to discover anything new in this field. It is only rediscovering and substantiating what yogis discovered many, many centuries ago.

A universal event

The seat of kundalini is a small gland at the base of the spinal cord. With the evolution of the natural forces in man, this gland has now come to a point where man can explode it. Those people who have awakened this supernatural force have been called rishis, prophets, yogis, siddhas and various other names according to the time, tradition and culture. In India the entire cultural setup was once organized to facilitate this explosion, but today things are a little different because materialism is a very powerful force, and for the moment it has even stupefied the Indian mind.

For the awakening of kundalini, not only the practices of yoga are required. If this awakening is to become a universal event, then the entire social structure has to be reorganized and millions of people all over the world have to be told the purpose of their existence. The whole of life from the time of conception to the moment when you leave the body, each and everything has to be reoriented. You will see in this book how even the instinctive and emotional interaction between men and women must be revised and refined, so that it can lead us not away from, but towards this ultimate awakening. This reorientation has to be undertaken with the purpose of expanding the mind and opening new doors of experience.

Today we are living in a world where everyone is more or less satisfied. We have all the comforts and everything we need and do not need. There will come a time, however, when man will be prepared to throw off these comforts. Luxury and comfort weaken the will and keep one under constant hypnosis. Alcohol and drugs are not as dangerous as total slavery to luxury and comfort. Man cannot pull himself away from them. It is impossible unless he has become aware of something more than that which his parents and society could give him.

Formerly there were only a few seekers, but now millions and millions of people in the world are striving for a higher experience. This higher experience is known as knowledge. When, through yoga and tantra, the awakening of kundalini takes place, a process of metamorphosis occurs in the realm of nature and in the realm of spirit. The elements of both the physical and the mental body also change.

It may be difficult for people of today to understand the whole concept, but soon humanity will comprehend it all. Matter will become unnecessary and insignificant. Behind the matter and behind the mind there is energy and there is an experience of that energy.

Proceed slowly, sensibly and systematically

Yet, you should not try to realize and experience these things abruptly. You will find here detailed instructions on the gradual preparation of your mind and body for the arousal of kundalini, and advice on elementary precautions to be observed in order to avoid unnecessary risks and obstacles. Do not try to influence your mind directly, because the mind is nothing but an extension of the body complex. Start systematically with the body, the prana, the nadis and chakras, according to the scheme outlined in this book. Then see how you evolve.

Many people, encouraged by a type of hurried philosophy, take to drugs, chemicals and other things they consider to be speedy alternatives. They are very serious people I believe, but they are not practical and systematic because they think they can transcend the role of the body in the realm of evolution. In the final evolution of mind, matter and man, you cannot ignore either the body or the mind. You cannot even ignore the nose, the stomach or the digestive system. That is why this transcendental philosophy begins with the basic considerations of diet and yogic physiology that you find discussed here.

The discovery of the great energy began with matter. Did nuclear energy descend from heaven? No, it evolved from crude matter. Where does the experience generate from? From heaven? From the sanctum sanctorum? No, from this body and this nervous system. That is how you should be practical and sensible.

This book presents a systematic and pragmatic approach to the awakening of kundalini. It begins with an expanded understanding of the true role and potential of the body and nervous system, moving through an exhaustive examination of the different methods of awakening suitable for different personalities and conditions. You will find clear and direct instructions on the actual yogic and tantric techniques to be practised towards this goal, together with a map of possible experiences you may encounter as the practices mature, so that you can sustain this great awakening and integrate it into a more conscious and creative way of life.

We have included here a systematic schedule of practice, within the context of a philosophy that is both pragmatic and transcendental, to prepare you in every way for this great adventure in consciousness.

Kundalini
Ye Man, Tame the Kundalini

when I was six years old I had a spontaneous spiritual experience during which I became completely unaware of my body for quite a long time. Again, when I was ten, the same thing happened, but this time I was old enough to think and rationalize, and I told my father about it. At first he did not understand what had happened and he wanted to take me to a doctor, but fortunately there were no doctors in our area at that time. Had there been, perhaps I would have ended up in a mental hospital, but things being what they were, I did not have to undergo treatment and was left unattended.

My father had great regard for the Vedas and for his guru. One day this guru happened to visit my home town, so my father took me to him and asked his advice about me. The sage told him that I had had a spiritual experience and therefore should be instructed to lead a spiritual life. My father obeyed his guru and arranged for me to be trained accordingly. Thus at an early age I was dedicated to the spiritual quest.

My family was Hindu, and in Hinduism there are two traditions: one believes in the worship of idols, and the other that God is formless. My family belonged to the latter, but still I often looked at the pictures of all the different deities and wondered at them. Durga was mounted on a lion; Saraswati on a swan; Vishnu lay sleeping on a huge cobra; Kali was completely naked, standing on the body of Shiva; Tara too was naked and Shiva was drinking milk from her breast. I could not understand what it all meant. Why did Shiva ride upon a bull and have so many snakes wrapped around him; how could the Ganga flow from his hair; why was Ganesha, with his enormous elephantine head and pot belly, riding on a small rat? I thought that there must be some symbolic meaning behind all this, but I only began to understand it through kundalini yoga, which I started practising at the age of fifteen, while still at school.

Around this time I had another experience. I was sitting quietly when suddenly, without any effort, my mind turned inwards. I immediately saw the whole earth with its oceans, continents, mountains and cities, crack into pieces. I did not understand this vision until a few days later when the Second World War broke out. This really made me begin to wonder. How could I have seen this future event symbolically in meditation when living in a remote area? I had neither heard nor read about it previously, nor had I any way of knowing that it was coming.

A new life begins

By the time I was seventeen, I was asking questions which nobody could answer. I wondered about things like the difference between perception and experience. I talked a lot about such topics with my maternal uncle and younger sister, but this did not quench my thirst and I knew I had to go out and discover the answers for myself. I postponed my departure from home until one day my father pushed me out with ninety rupees in my pocket. Thus my wandering life began.

During my travels I met a very old swami who invited me to stay in his ashram. He had a wonderful knowledge of tantra and taught me many things. Though I knew I would never forget him, he was not my guru and after nine months I left his ashram and continued wandering. Soon after I arrived in Rishikesh, where I heard about Swami Sivananda. I went to him and asked how to experience the highest consciousness. He told me to stay in his ashram and he would guide me. So I followed monastic life, but still, for a long time I was puzzled about the purpose of my existence. I felt that man was a seeker, yet I really did not know what I was seeking and was often left with the terrifying question that man asks himself regarding death.

The awakening of kundalini

Sometime later I had another experience while sitting on the banks of the Ganga. I was thinking of something mundane when my mind spontaneously started going in and in. Suddenly I felt as if the earth was slipping from under me and the sky was expanding and receding. A moment later I experienced a terrible force springing from the base of my body like an atomic explosion. I felt that I was vibrating very fast, the light currents were terrific. I experienced the supreme bliss, like the climax of a man's desire, and it continued for a long time. My whole body was contracting until the feeling of pleasure became quite unbearable and I completely lost awareness of my body. This was the third time it had happened.

After returning to consciousness I was listless for many days. I could not eat, sleep or move, even to go to the toilet. I saw everything but nothing registered. The bliss was a living thing within me and I knew that if I moved, this wonderful feeling would cease; I would lose the intensity of it all. How could I move when bells were ringing inside? This was the awakening of my kundalini.

After a week or so I returned to normal and then I started to study tantra and yoga very seriously. At first I was still a bit weak and sick, so I practised hatha yoga to purify my whole system. Then I began to explore the fantastic science of kundalini yoga. What is this power which awakens in mooladhara chakra? My

interest was aroused and I put much effort into trying to understand this marvellous force.
With the awakening of kundalini, the greater intelligence is aroused from its sleep and you can give birth to a new range of creativity. When kundalini awakens, not only are you blessed with visions and psychic experiences, you could become a prophet, saint, inspired artist or musician, a brilliant writer or poet, a clairvoyant or messiah. Or you could become an outstanding leader, prime minister, governor or president. The awakening of kundalini affects the whole area of the human mind and behaviour.
Kundalini is not a myth or an illusion. It is not a hypothesis or a hypnotic suggestion. Kundalini is a biological substance that exists within the framework of the body. Its awakening generates electrical impulses throughout the whole body and these impulses can be detected by modern scientific instruments and machines. Therefore, each of us should consider the importance and the benefits of awakening kundalini, and we should make a resolve to awaken this great shakti.

What is Kundalini?

Everybody should know something about kundalini as it represents the coming consciousness of mankind. Kundalini is the name of a sleeping dormant potential force in the human organism and it is situated at the root of the spinal column. In the masculine body it is in the perineum, between the urinary and excretory organs. In the female body its location is at the root of the uterus, in the cervix. This centre is known as mooladhara chakra and it is actually a physical structure. It is a small gland which you can even take out and press. However, kundalini is a dormant energy, and even if you press it, it will not explode like a bomb.
To awaken kundalini you must prepare yourself through yogic techniques. You must practise asanas, pranayama, kriya yoga and meditation. Then, when you are able to direct your prana into the seat of kundalini, the energy wakes up and makes its way through sushumna nadi, in the central nervous canal, to the brain. As kundalini ascends, it passes through each of the chakras which are interconnected with the different silent areas of the brain. With the awakening of kundalini there is an explosion in the brain as the dormant or sleeping areas start blossoming like flowers. Therefore, kundalini can be equated with the awakening of the silent areas of the brain.
Although kundalini is said to reside in mooladhara chakra, we are all at different stages of evolution, and in some of us kundalini may have already reached swadhisthana, manipura or anahata chakra. If this is so, whatever sadhana you do now might start an awakening in anahata or some other chakra. However, awakening of kundalini in mooladhara chakra is one thing, and awakening in sahasrara, the highest centre of the brain, is another. Once the multipetalled lotus of sahasrara blossoms, a new consciousness dawns. Our present consciousness is not independent, as the mind depends on the information supplied by the senses. If you have no eyes, you can never see; if you are deaf, you will never hear. However, when the superconsciousness emerges, experience becomes completely independent and knowledge also becomes completely independent.

How kundalini was discovered

Right from the beginning of creation, man witnessed many transcendental happenings. Sometimes he was able to read the thoughts of others, he witnessed somebody else's predictions coming true, or he may even have seen his own dreams manifesting into realities. He pondered over the fact that some people could write inspiring poems or compose beautiful music whereas others could not; one person could fight on the battlefield for days together and another person could not even get out of bed. So he wanted to discover why everybody seemed to be different.
During the course of his investigations, man came to understand that within every individual there is a special form of energy. He saw that in some people this energy was dormant, in others it was evolving and in a very small minority it was actually awakened. Originally, man named this energy after the gods, goddesses, angels or divinities. Then he discovered prana and called it prana shakti. In tantra they called it kundalini.

What the various names for kundalini mean

In Sanskrit, *kundal* means a coil, and so kundalini has been described as that which is coiled. This is the traditional belief, but it has been incorrectly understood. The word *kundalini* actually comes from the word *kunda*, meaning a deeper place, pit or cavity. The fire used in the ceremony of initiation is kindled in a pit called a kunda. Similarly, the place where a dead body is burned is a kunda. If you dig a ditch or a hole, it is called a kunda. Kunda refers to the concave cavity in which the brain, resembling a coiled and sleeping serpent, nestles. (If you have the opportunity of examining a dissection of the human brain you will see that it is in the form of a coil or snake curled up upon itself.) This is the true meaning of kundalini. The word kundalini refers to the shakti or power when it is in its dormant potential state, but when it is manifesting, you can call it Devi,

Kali, Durga, Saraswati, Lakshmi or any other name according to the manifestation it is exhibiting before you. In the Christian tradition, the terms 'the Path of the Initiates' and 'the Stairway to Heaven' used in the Bible, refer to kundalini's ascent through sushumna nadi. The ascent of kundalini and, ultimately, the descent of spiritual grace, are symbolized by the cross. This is why Christians make the sign of the cross at ajna, anahata and vishuddhi chakras, for ajna is the centre where the ascending consciousness is transcended and anahata is where the descending grace is made manifest to the world.

Whatever happens in spiritual life, it is related to the awakening of kundalini. And the goal of every form of spiritual life, whether you call it samadhi, nirvana, moksha, communion, union, kaivalya, liberation or whatever, is in fact awakening of kundalini.

Kundalini, Kali and Durga

When kundalini has just awakened and you are not able to handle it, it is called Kali. When you can handle it and are able to use it for beneficial purposes and you become powerful on account of it, it is called Durga.

Kali is a female deity, naked, black or smoky in colour, wearing a mala of one hundred and eight human skulls, representing the memories of different births. Kali's lolling tongue of a blood red colour signifies the rajo guna whose circular movement gives impetus to all creative activities. By this specific gesture, she is exhorting sadhakas to control their rajo guna. The sacrificial sword and the severed head held by the left hand are the symbols of dissolution. Darkness and death are by no means the mere absence of light and life, rather they are their origin. The sadhaka worships the cosmic power in its female form, for she represents the kinetic aspect, the masculine being the static aspect which is activated only through her power.

In Hindu mythology, the awakening of Kali has been described in great detail. When Kali rises in red anger, all the gods and demons are stunned and everybody keeps quiet. They do not know what she is going to do. They ask Lord Shiva to pacify her, but Kali roars ferociously, throwing him down and standing on his chest with her mouth wide open, thirsty for flesh and blood. When the devas hold prayers to pacify Kali, she becomes calm and quiet.

Then there is the emergence of Durga, the higher, more refined and benign symbols of the unconscious. Durga is a beautiful goddess seated on a tiger. She has eight hands representing the eightfold elements. Durga wears a mala of human heads to symbolize her wisdom and power. These heads are generally fifty-two in number, representing the fifty-two letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, which are the outer manifestations of Shabda Brahma or Brahma in the form of sound. Durga is the remover of all evil consequences of life and the giver of power and peace that is released from mooladhara.

According to yoga philosophy, Kali, the first manifestation of the unconscious kundalini is a terrible power; it completely subdues the individual soul, represented by her standing on Lord Shiva. It sometimes happens that due to mental instability, some people come into contact with their unconscious body and see inauspicious, ferocious elements – ghosts, monsters, etc. When Kali, the unconscious power of man, is awakened she goes up to meet the further manifestation, being Durga, the superconscious, bestowing glory and beauty.

Symbolic representation of kundalini

In the tantric texts, kundalini is conceived of as the primal power or energy. In terms of modern psychology, it can be called the unconscious in man. As we have just discussed, in Hindu mythology, kundalini corresponds to the concept of Kali. In the philosophy of Shaivism, the concept of kundalini is represented by the shivalingam, the oval-shaped stone or pillar with a snake coiled around it.

However, most commonly, kundalini is illustrated as a sleeping serpent coiled three and a half times. Of course, there is no serpent residing in mooladhara, sahasrara or any other chakra, but the serpent has always been a symbol for efficient consciousness. In all the oldest mystic cults of the world you will find the serpent, and if you have seen any pictures of images of Lord Shiva, you will have noticed serpents girdling his waist, neck and arms. Kali is also adorned with serpents and Lord Vishnu eternally reposes on a large coiled serpent. This serpent power symbolizes the unconscious in man.

In Scandinavian, European, Latin American and Middle Eastern countries and many different civilizations of the world, the concept of the serpent power is represented in monuments and ancient artefacts. This means that kundalini was known to people from all parts of the world in the past. However, we can conceive of kundalini in any manner we like because actually, prana has no form or dimension, it is infinite.

In the traditional descriptions of kundalini awakening, it is said that kundalini resides in mooladhara in the form of a coiled snake and when the snake awakens it uncoils and shoots up through sushumna (the psychic passage in the centre of the spinal cord), opening the other chakras as it goes. (See Sir John Woodroffe's *The Serpent Power*.) Brahmachari Swami Vyasdev, in his book *Science of the Soul*, describes the awakening of kundalini in the following way: "Sadhakas have seen the sushumna in the form of a luminous rod or pillar, a golden yellow snake, or sometimes as a shining black snake about ten inches long

with blood red eyes like smouldering charcoal, the front part of the tongue vibrating and shining like lightning, ascending the spinal column."
The meaning of the three coils of the serpent is as follows: the three coils represent the three matras of Om, which relate to past, present and future; to the three gunas: tamas, rajas and sattwa; to the three states of consciousness: waking, sleeping and dreaming; and to the three types of experience: subjective experience, sensual experience and absence of experience. The half coil represents the state of transcendence, where there is neither waking, sleeping nor dreaming. So, the three and a half coils signify the total experience of the universe and the experience of transcendence.

Who can awaken kundalini?

There are many people who have awakened their kundalini. Not only saints and sadhus, but poets, painters, warriors, writers, anyone can awaken their kundalini. With the awakening of kundalini, not only visions of God take place, there is dawning of creative intelligence and an awakening of supramental faculties. By activating kundalini you may become anything in life.
The energy of kundalini is one energy, but it expresses itself differently through the individual psychic centres or chakras – first in gross instinctive ways and then in progressively more subtle ways. Refining of the expression of this energy at higher and more subtle levels of vibration represents the ascent of human consciousness to its highest possibilities.
Kundalini is the creative energy; it is the energy of self expression. Just as in reproduction a new life is created, in the same way, someone like Einstein uses that same energy in a different, more subtle realm, to create a theory like relativity. It is the same energy that is expressed when someone composes or plays beautiful music. It is the same energy which is expressed in all parts of life, whether it is building up a business, fulfilling the family duties or reaching whatever goal you aspire for. These are all expressions of the same creative energy. Everybody, whether householder or sannyasin, must remember that the awakening of kundalini is the prime purpose of human incarnation. All the pleasures of sensual life which we are enjoying now are intended only to enhance the awakening of kundalini amidst the adverse circumstances of human life.

A process of metamorphosis

With the awakening of kundalini, a transformation takes place in life. It has little to do with one's moral, religious or ethical life. It has more to do with the quality of our experiences and perceptions. When kundalini wakes up, your mind changes and your priorities and attachments also change. All your karmas undergo a process of integration. It is very simple to understand. When you were a child you loved toys, but why don't you love them now? Because your mind has changed and consequently, your attachments have also changed. So with the awakening of kundalini, a metamorphosis takes place. There is even the possibility of restructuring the entire physical body.
When kundalini awakens, the physical body actually undergoes many changes. Generally they are positive, but if your guru is not cautious, they can be negative also. When the shakti wakes up, the cells in the body are completely charged and a process of rejuvenation also starts. The voice changes, the smell of the body changes and the hormonal secretions also change. In fact, the transformation of cells in the body and brain takes place at a much higher rate than normal. These are just a few observations. However, scientific researchers are still taking their first steps into this field.

Why awaken kundalini?

If you want to take up the practice of kundalini yoga, the most important thing is that you have a reason or an aim. If you want to awaken kundalini for psychic powers, then please go ahead with your own destiny. But if you want to awaken kundalini in order to enjoy communion between Shiva and Shakti, the actual communion between the two great forces within you, and if you want to enter samadhi and experience the absolute in the cosmos, and if you want to understand the truth behind the appearance, and if the purpose of your pilgrimage is very great, then there is nothing that can come to you as an obstacle.
By means of kundalini awakening, you are compensating for the laws of nature and speeding up the pace of your physical, mental and spiritual evolution. Once the great shakti awakens, man is no longer a gross physical body operating with a lower mind and low voltage prana. Instead, every cell of the body is charged with the high voltage prana of kundalini. And when total awakening occurs, man becomes a junior god, an embodiment of divinity.

Kundalini Physiology

Kundalini or the serpent power does not belong to the physical body, though it is connected to it. Nor can it be discovered in the mental body or even the astral body. Its abode is actually in the causal body, where the concepts of time, space and object are completely lost.

How and where is the concept of kundalini related to the supreme consciousness? The serpent power is considered to arise from the unconscious state in mooladhara. This unconscious awareness then has to pass through different phases and becomes one with the cosmic awareness in the highest realm of existence. The supreme awareness of Shiva is considered to be seated in sahasrara, the superconscious or transcendental body at the crown of the head. In the Vedas, as well as the Tantras, this supreme seat is called *hiranyagarbha*, the womb of consciousness. It corresponds to the pituitary body, the master gland situated within the brain.

Immediately below this centre of supreme consciousness, there is another psychic centre – the third eye or ajna chakra, which corresponds to the pineal gland. This is the seat of intuitive knowledge. This centre lies on top of the spinal column, at the level of *bhrumadhya*, the eyebrow centre. Ajna chakra is important because it is simultaneously connected with the seat of supreme consciousness in sahasrara, and with mooladhara, the seat of the unconscious, at the base of the spine, via sushumna, the psychic passage within the spinal column. Therefore, it is the connecting link between the lowest unconscious seat of power and the highest centre of illumination within the individual.

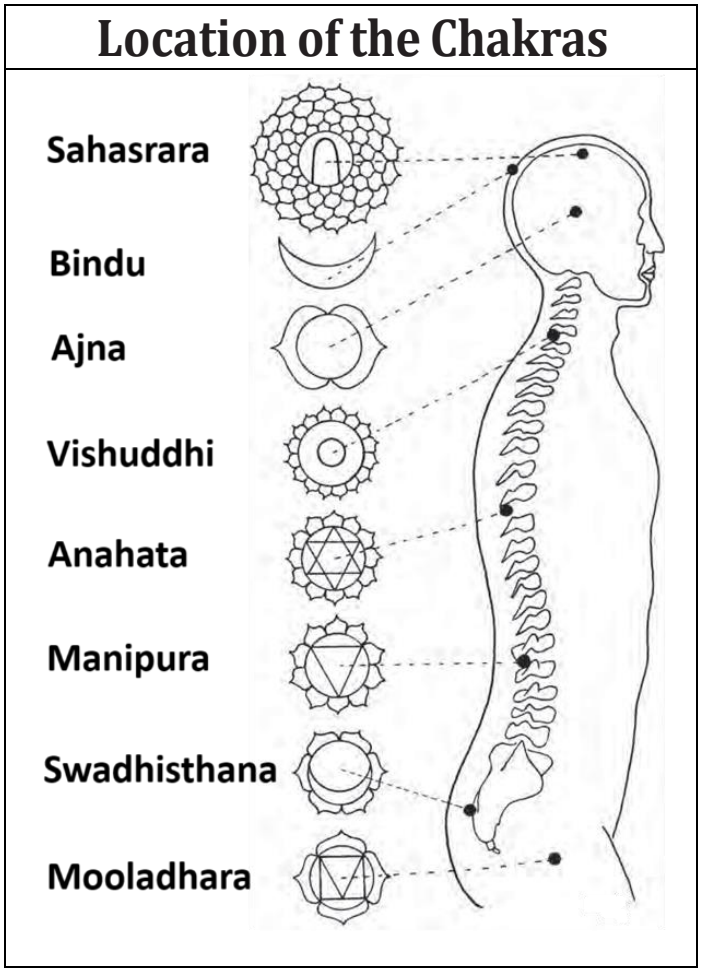
Kundalini yoga is not abstract. It considers this very physical body as the basis. For a kundalini yogi, the supreme consciousness represents the highest possible manifestation of physical matter in this body. The matter of this physical body is being transformed into subtle forces – such as feeling, thinking, reasoning, remembering, postulating and doubting, in the gradual process of evolution. This psychic, suprasensory or transcendental power is the ultimate point of human evolution.

The chakras

The literal meaning of the word *chakra* is 'wheel' or 'circle', but in the yogic context a better translation of the Sanskrit word is 'vortex' or 'whirlpool'. The chakras are vortices of psychic energy and they are visualized and experienced as circular movements of energy at particular rates of vibration.

In each person there are myriads of chakras, but in the practices of tantra and yoga, only a few principal ones are utilized. These chakras span the full spectrum of man's being, from the gross to the subtle.

The chakras relate to physiological as well as psychic centres whose structures correspond more or less with the traditional descriptions. These nerve centres are not situated inside the spinal cord itself, but lie like junctions on the interior walls of the spinal column. If you cut the spinal cord transversely at different levels, you can see that the grey matter in the cross section resembles the lotus shape and the ascending and descending tracts of nerve fibres correspond to the nadis. These communicating nerve fibres control the different physiological functions of that portion of the body. Many books state that the chakras are reservoirs of power, but this is not true.



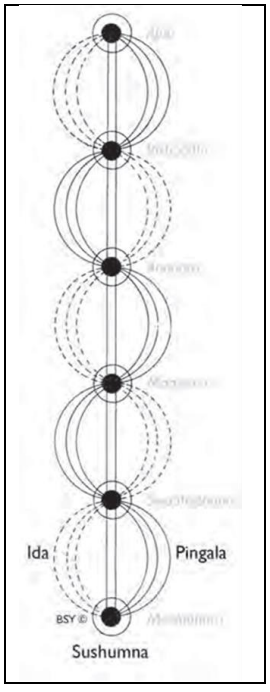
A chakra is like a centrally placed electricity pole from which electrical wires are run to different places, houses and street lights in the vicinity. This arrangement is the same for each one of the chakras. The nadis which emerge from each chakra carry prana in both directions. There is a forward and backward pranic motion in the nadis, which is analogous to the flow of alternating current in electrical wires. The outgoing communication and the incoming reaction enter and leave the chakra in the form of this pranic flow in the corresponding nadis.

There are six chakras in the human body which are directly connected with the higher unillumined centres of the brain. The first chakra is mooladhara. It is situated in the pelvic floor and corresponds to the coccygeal plexus of nerves. In the masculine body it lies between the urinary and excretory openings, in the form of a small dormant gland termed the perineal body. In the feminine body it is situated inside the posterior surface of the cervix.

Mooladhara is the first chakra in spiritual evolution, where one goes beyond animal consciousness and starts to

be a real human being. It is also the last chakra in the completion of animal evolution. It is said that from mooladhara chakra right down to the heels there are other lower chakras which are responsible for the development of the animal and human qualities of instinct and intellect. From mooladhara chakra upwards lie the chakras which are concerned with illumination and evolution of the higher or super man. Mooladhara chakra has control over the entire range of human excretory and sexual functions.
The second chakra is *swadhisthana*, located at the lowest point or termination of the spinal cord. It corresponds to the sacral plexus of nerves and controls the unconscious.
The third chakra is *manipura*, situated in the spinal column exactly at the level of the navel. It corresponds to the solar plexus and controls the entire processes of digestion, assimilation and temperature regulation in the body.
The fourth chakra is *anahata*, and it lies in the vertebral column behind the base of the heart, at the level of the depression in the sternum. It corresponds to the cardiac plexus of nerves, and also controls the functions of the heart, the lungs, the diaphragm and other organs in this region of the body.
The fifth chakra is *vishuddhi*, which lies at the level of the throat pit in the vertebral column. This chakra corresponds to the cervical plexus of nerves and controls the thyroid complex and also some systems of articulation, the upper palate and the epiglottis.
Ajna, the sixth and most important chakra, corresponds to the pineal gland, lying in the midline of the brain directly above the spinal column. This chakra controls the muscles and the onset of sexual activity. Tantra and yoga maintain that ajna chakra, the command centre, has complete control over all the functions of the disciple's life.
These six chakras serve as switches for turning on different parts of the brain. The awakening which is brought about in the chakras is conducted to the higher centres in the brain via the nadis.
There are also two higher centres in the brain which are commonly referred to in kundalini yoga: bindu and sahasrara. *Bindu* is located at the top back of the head, where Hindu Brahmins keep a tuft of hair. This is the point where oneness first divides itself into many. Bindu feeds the whole optic system and is also the seat of nectar or amrit.
Sahasrara is supreme; it is the final culmination of kundalini shakti. It is the seat of higher awareness. Sahasrara is situated at the top of the head and is physically correlated to the pituitary gland, which controls each and every gland and system of the body.

Nadis



Nadis are not nerves but rather channels for the flow of consciousness. The literal meaning of *nadi* is flow. Just as the negative and positive forces of electricity flow through complex circuits, in the same way, *prana shakti* (vital force) and *manas shakti* (mental force) flow through every part of our body via these nadis. According to the tantras there are 72,000 or more such channels or networks through which the stimuli flow like an electric current from one point to another. These 72,000 nadis cover the whole body and through them the inherent rhythms of activity in the different organs of the body are maintained. Within this network of nadis, there are ten main channels, and of these ten, three are most important for they control the flow of prana and consciousness within all the other nadis of the body. These three nadis are called ida, pingala and sushumna. *Ida nadi* controls all the mental processes, while *pingala nadi* controls all the vital processes. Ida is known as the moon, and pingala as the sun. A third nadi, *sushumna*, is the channel for the awakening of spiritual consciousness. You may consider these three nadis as pranic force, mental force and spiritual force.
As sushumna flows inside the central canal of the spinal cord, ida and pingala simultaneously flow on the outer surface of the spinal cord, still within the bony vertebral column. Ida, pingala and sushumna nadis begin in mooladhara in the pelvic floor. From there, sushumna flows directly upwards within the central canal, while ida passes to the left and pingala to the right. At swadhisthana chakra, or the sacral plexus, the three nadis come together again and ida and pingala cross over one another. Ida passes up to the right, pingala to the left, and sushumna continues to flow directly upwards in the central canal. The three nadis come together again at manipura chakra, the solar plexus, and so on. Finally, ida, pingala and sushumna meet in the ajna chakra.
Ida and pingala function in the body alternately and not simultaneously. If you observe your nostrils, you will find that generally one is flowing freely and the other is blocked. When the left nostril is open, it is the lunar energy or ida nadi which is flowing. When the right nostril is free, the solar energy or pingala nadi is flowing.
Investigations have shown that when the right nostril is flowing, the left hemisphere of the brain is activated.

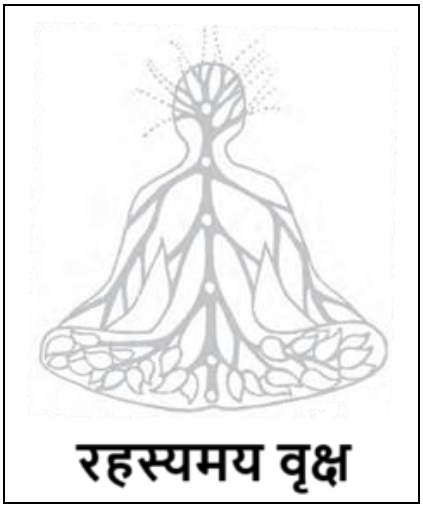
When the left nostril is flowing, the right hemisphere is activated. This is how the nadis or energy channels control the brain and the events of life and consciousness.
Now, if these two energies – prana and chitta, pingala and ida, life and consciousness, can be made to function simultaneously, then both hemispheres of the brain can be made to function simultaneously and to participate together in the thinking, living, intuitive and regulating processes.
In ordinary life this does not happen because the simultaneous awakening and functioning of life force and consciousness can take place only if the central canal, sushumna, is connected with kundalini, the source of energy. If sushumna can be connected in the physical body, it can reactivate the brain cells and create a new physical structure.

The importance of awakening sushumna

Sushumna nadi is regarded as a hollow tube in which there are three more concentric tubes, each being progressively more subtle than the previous one. The tubes or nadis are as follows: *sushumna* – signifying tamas, *vajrini* – signifying rajas, *chitrini* – signifying sattwa, and *brahma* – signifying consciousness. The higher consciousness created by kundalini passes through brahma nadi.
When the kundalini shakti awakens it passes through sushumna nadi. The moment awakening takes place in mooladhara chakra, the energy makes headway through sushumna up to ajna chakra.
Mooladhara chakra is just like a powerful generator. In order to start this generator, you need some sort of pranic energy. This pranic energy is generated through pranayama. When you practise pranayama you generate energy and this energy is forced down by a positive pressure which starts the generator in mooladhara chakra. Then this generated energy is pushed upward by a negative pressure and forced up to ajna chakra.
Therefore, awakening of sushumna is just as important as awakening of kundalini. Supposing you have started your generator but you have not plugged in the cable, the generator will keep running but distribution will not take place. You have to connect the plug into the generator so the generated energy can pass through the cable to the different areas of your house.
When only ida and pingala are active and not sushumna, it is like having the positive and negative lines in your electrical cable, but no earth. When the mind receives the three currents of energy all the lights start working, but if you remove the earth wire the lights will go down. Energy flows through ida and pingala all the time, but its effulgence is very low. When there is current flowing in ida, pingala and sushumna, then enlightenment takes place. This is how you have to understand the awakening of kundalini, the awakening of sushumna and the union of the three in ajna chakra.
The whole science of kundalini yoga concerns the awakening of sushumna, for once sushumna comes to life, a means of communication between the higher and lower dimensions of consciousness is established and the awakening of kundalini occurs. Shakti then travels up sushumna nadi to become one with Shiva in sahasrara chakra.
Kundalini awakening is definitely not fictional or symbolic; it is electrophysiological! Many modern scientists are working on this, and Dr Hiroshi Motoyama of Japan has developed a unit by which the waves and currents of energy, which accompany the awakening of kundalini, can be recorded and measured.
When the roots of a plant are watered properly, the plant grows and its flowers bloom forth beautifully. Similarly, when kundalini awakening occurs in sushumna, awakening occurs in all the stages of life. But if awakening only occurs in ida or pingala or in one of the other centres, it is by no means complete. Only when kundalini shakti awakens and travels up the sushumna passage to sahasrara is the entire store of higher energy in man unleashed.

The mystical tree

In the fifteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* there is a description of the imperishable tree which has its roots at the top and its trunk and branches below, growing downwards. One who knows this tree knows the truth. This tree exists in the structure and function of the human body and nervous system. One must know and climb this paradoxical tree to arrive at the truth. It can be understood in this way: the thoughts, the emotions, the distractions and so on are only the leaves of this tree whose roots are the brain itself and whose trunk is the spinal column. One has to climb this tree from the top to the bottom if one wishes to cut the roots. This tree seems to be completely topsy-turvy, yet it contains the essence of all occult truth and secret knowledge. It cannot be understood intellectually, but only through a progressive spiritual awakening, for true spiritual understanding always dawns in a way which is paradoxical and irrational to the faculty of intellect. This same tree is known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as the 'Tree of Life' in the Kabbalah and as the 'Tree of Knowledge' in the Bible. Its understanding forms the basis of both the Christian and Judaic religious traditions, but unfortunately it has been completely misunderstood, by and large, for a very long time.

So it is that everybody who is trying to move from mooladhara to sahasrara is climbing to the root every time, and the root is at the brain, the sahasrara. Mooladhara is not the root centre at all. So if you are moving from swadhisthana to sahasrara or from manipura to sahasrara, then you are climbing to the root, which is at the top in sahasrara.

Kundalini and the Brain

The awakening of kundalini and its union with Shiva is immediately and intimately connected with the whole brain. To explain it simply, we can say the brain has ten compartments, and of these, nine are dormant and one is active. Whatever you know, whatever you think or do is coming from one-tenth of the brain. The other nine-tenths, which are in the frontal portion of the brain, are known as the inactive or sleeping brain.

Why are these compartments inactive? Because there is no energy. The active portion of the brain functions on the energies of ida and pingala, but the other nine-tenths have only pingala. Pingala is life and ida is consciousness. If a person is living but is unable to think, we say he has prana shakti but not manas shakti. Similarly, the silent parts of the brain have prana, not consciousness.

Therefore, a very difficult question arises, which is how to awaken the sleeping compartments of the brain? We know how to awaken fear, anxiety and passion, the basic instincts, but most of us do not know how to awaken these dormant areas of the brain. In order to arouse the silent areas of the brain, we must charge the frontal brain with sufficient prana, with sufficient vital energy and consciousness, and we must awaken sushumna nadi. For both these purposes we must practise pranayama regularly and consistently over a long period of time.

Lighting up the brain

In kundalini yoga it was discovered that the different parts of the brain are connected with the chakras. Certain areas are connected with mooladhara chakra, others with swadhisthana, manipura, and so on. When you want to turn on an electric lamp, you do not have to touch the lamp itself, you operate it by means of the switch on the wall. Likewise, when you want to awaken the brain, you cannot deal with it directly, you have to flick the switches which are located in the chakras.

Modern science divides the dormant area of the brain into ten parts, whereas in kundalini yoga we divide it into six. The qualities or manifestations of the brain are also sixfold, for example, the psychic powers. These manifest in different individuals according to the degree of awakening in the corresponding areas of the brain. Not everybody is clairvoyant or telepathic; some people are talented musicians. Anybody can sing, but there is a centre in the brain where transcendental music expresses itself.

Total and partial awakening

A genius is one who has awakened one or more of the dormant areas of the brain. People who have flashes of genius are those who have had a momentary awakening in certain circuits of the brain. It is not total awakening. When the total brain wakes up, you become a junior god, an incarnation or embodiment of divinity. There are various types of geniuses: child prodigies, inspired poets, musicians, inventors, prophets, etc., in whom a partial awakening has occurred.

Sahasrara is the actual seat of kundalini

Although the classical descriptions place heavy emphasis on the awakening of kundalini in mooladhara chakra, there is a widespread misconception that kundalini must be awakened there and made to travel through and awaken all the chakras in turn. In fact, the seat of kundalini is actually sahasrara. Mooladhara is only a manipulating centre or switch, like the other chakras, but it happens to be easier for most people to operate this switch.

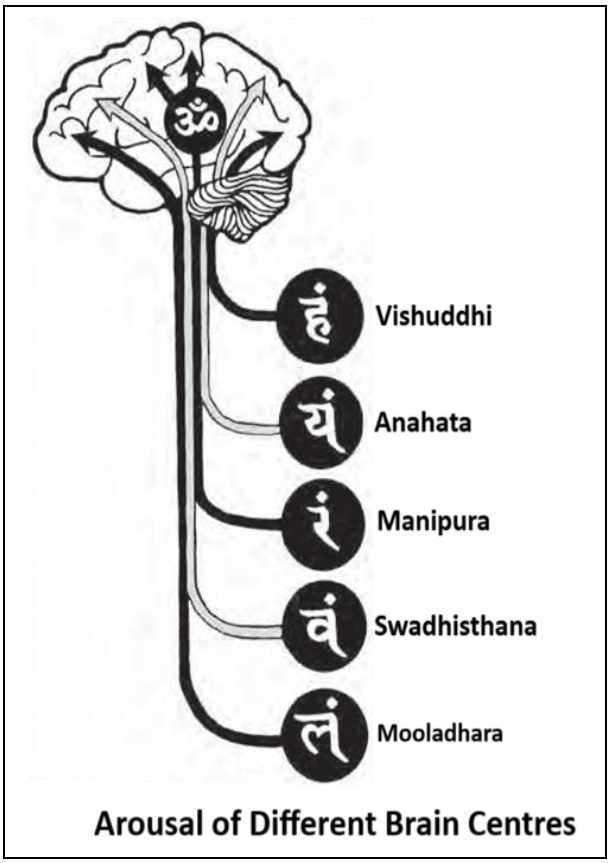
Each of the chakras is independent; they are not connected with each other. This means that if kundalini shakti awakens in mooladhara, it goes directly to sahasrara, to a particular centre in the brain. Similarly, from swadhisthana the shakti passes directly to sahasrara, from manipura it goes straight to sahasrara and so on. Kundalini can be awakened in an individual chakra or it can awaken throughout the whole network of chakras collectively. From each chakra, the awakening shock moves up to the top of sahasrara. However, the awakening is not sustained and those centres in the brain return to dormancy. This is what is meant by the return of kundalini to mooladhara.

If kundalini awakens in an individual chakra, the experiences which are characteristic of that chakra will be brought into consciousness. This may also occur when one does the practices for an individual chakra. For example, swadhisthana practices will raise joy; manipura practices will increase self-assertion; anahata

stimulation will expand the love; vishuddhi practices will awaken discrimination and wisdom, and ajna practices will increase the flow of intuition, knowledge and perhaps extrasensory abilities and so on.
If the nervous system is highly aroused, we may have other faculties opening because of the general arousal of the brain. This probably results from stimulation of an area in the lower end of the brain called the *reticular formation*. The function of this area is to rouse the whole brain or to relax it, as in sleep.
The reticular formation and related areas have an inherent rhythm which is responsible for our sleeping/ waking cycles, but it is also largely activated by sensations from outside – by light, sound, touch, etc., and from inside via the autonomic nervous system. It is the latter which seems to account for the more general arousal caused by the kundalini practices and other powerful yoga practices such as kumbhaka or breath retention.

Kundalini – energy or nerve messages?

There are a number of schools of thought as to what kundalini really is. Many yogis say that kundalini is a flow of pranic energy along an esoteric pathway (sushumna) associated with the spinal axis. They consider that it is part of the flow of prana within the meshwork of the pranic body and that there is no anatomical counterpart. Other yogis relate their perceptions of kundalini to the flow of messages along the nerve fibres. These arise in the networks of the autonomic plexuses and ascend along tracts in the spinal cord to definite anatomical centres in the brain.



Arousal of Different Brain Centres

These schools of thought use different descriptions to convey the experience of kundalini, but they all agree that the experience of kundalini is a total psychophysiological event which centres around the spinal cord. Within the spinal cord there is a very important fluid, the cerebrospinal fluid. When, through practices such as pranayama, awakening occurs in mooladhara chakra, this fluid gets excited. We cannot really say what happens to it because even the scientists are not exactly sure, but by studying the experiences of kundalini awakening, one thing is apparent. When the cerebrospinal fluid moves through the vertebral column, it alters the phases of consciousness and this is a very important process as far as evolution is concerned.
It is the chitta or consciousness which undergoes evolution in man. Chitta does not have a location point in the body, it is psychological in nature, but it is controlled by the information supplied by the *indriyas* or senses. While chitta is being constantly supplied with information, its evolution is blocked, but if you prevent the passage of information from the indriyas, chitta will evolve very quickly. That is to say, if you isolate chitta from the information being relayed through the eyes, nose, ears, skin and tongue, chitta is then compelled to experience independence. When the cerebrospinal fluid is affected during pranayama, the senses become dull and their messages are relayed to chitta very slowly. Sometimes, when the cerebrospinal fluid is highly stimulated, all sensory impulses are suspended and experiences take place within the chitta. Sometimes these experiences are fantastic, you might see light, feel the whole earth trembling or experience your body as if it were as light as a piece of cotton. These and others are the experiences of chitta as a consequence of the cerebrospinal fluid's reactions.
One world-renowned scientist, the late Itzhak Bentov, put forward the theory that kundalini is an effect caused by the rotation of nerve impulses around the cortex of the brain during meditation. He considered that this is caused by rhythmical pressure waves which result from the interaction of the heart beat, breathing, and the fluid inside the skull, thereby causing the brain to oscillate up and down, which stimulates specific nerve currents in the brain.

Unlocking the storehouse of cosmic consciousness

Although there are varying views about kundalini, one thing is certain – kundalini has the ability to activate the human consciousness in such a way that a person can develop his or her most beneficial qualities, can enter a much more intimate relationship with nature and can become aware of oneness with the whole cosmos. All the great miracles of the remote and recent past, and the ones yet to come, have sprung from what is known as the storehouse of cosmic consciousness, the golden egg, the golden worm, the hidden hiranyagarbha within the structure of the human brain. This particular centre in us is not sleeping or inactive, but it is

unconscious, only because we are not conscious of it. What came as a revelation to the ancient rishis, to Newton and Einstein and to many other great seers, exists in us also, but it came to their conscious plane while it does not come to ours. This is the only difference between an inspired artist and an ordinary person.
The aim of kundalini yoga is not really to awaken the power of man, but rather to bring the power down to earth or to bring the power of the unconscious or higher consciousness to normal consciousness. We have no need to awaken the consciousness, for it is ever awake. We have only to gain complete control over our higher conscious forces. By means of kundalini yoga we just try to bring the centres from mooladhara to ajna into operation so that the higher knowledge will be gradually revealed to us.
Today man has mastered the material dimension, the energy of prakriti, and discovered the mysteries of nature. Now, through the process of kundalini, man should become master of the spiritual dimension.

Methods of Awakening

According to the tantras, kundalini can be awakened by various methods which can be practised individually or in combination. However, the first method cannot be practised because it is awakened by birth. Of course, it is too late for most of us to take advantage of this particular method, but some of us may be instrumental in producing children who have awakened kundalinis.

Awakening by birth

By a favourable birth, if your parents were highly evolved, you can have an awakened kundalini. It is also possible to be born with an awakened sushumna, ida or pingala nadi. This means that from the time of birth your higher faculties will be operating either partially or fully. If a child comes with partial awakening, he is called a saint, and if he comes with full illumination, he is known as an incarnation, avatara or son of God.
If one is born with an awakened kundalini, his experiences are very much under control. They take place in him right from the beginning in a natural way, so he never feels that something extraordinary is happening to him. A child with an awakened kundalini has clarity of vision, a high quality of thinking and a sublime philosophy. His attitude to life is somewhat unusual as he has total detachment. To him, his parents were only his means of creation, and therefore he is unable to accept the normal social relationship with them. Although he may live with them, he feels as if he were just a guest. Such a child exhibits very mature behaviour and does not react emotionally to anything in life. As he grows he becomes aware of his mission and purpose in life.
Many of us may wish to give birth to a yogi or an enlightened child but it is not such a simple matter. Every marriage or union of partners cannot produce a yogi, even if the man and woman practise yoga morning and night. It is only under certain circumstances that a higher being can be produced. In order to usher a highly evolved soul into this world, one has first to transform one's gross desires into spiritual aspirations.
It is very difficult to convince people of the West that a child can be born in an enlightened state, because they have the moral attitudes of a particular religion deeply ingrained in their minds and their faith. For them, the union between a man and a woman is sin. If you explain to them that a yogi can be produced as a result of sexual union, they say, "No! How can a yogi be born out of sin?"
It is possible that a new generation of supermen and women will be produced in this way. Through the practices of yoga you can transform the quality of your genes. If genes can produce artists, scientists, inventors and intellectual geniuses, then why not awakened kundalinis? You have to transform the quality of your sperm or ova by firstly transforming your whole consciousness. Neither drugs nor diet will transform your genes, but if you change your consciousness, you can then affect the elements of the body and ultimately change the quality of the sperm or ova. Then you will have children with awakened kundalinis. They will become the yogis and spiritual masters of the house who set things right for you. They will say, "Mummy, you are not the physical body." "Papa, drinking is no good."
Those of you who choose to enter married life should go into it keeping in mind that the purpose is not just pleasure, or to produce offspring, but to create a genius. All over the world, people who marry for progeny should try for higher quality children.

Mantra

The second method of awakening kundalini is through steady regular practice of mantra. This is a very powerful, smooth and risk-free method, but of course it is a sadhana which requires time and a lot of patience. First you need to obtain a suitable mantra from a guru who knows yoga and tantra, and who can guide you through your sadhana. When you practise the mantra incessantly, it develops in you the vision of a higher force and enables you to live amidst the sensualities of life with indifference to them.
When you throw a pebble into a still lake, it produces circular ripples. In the same way, when you repeat a mantra over and over again, the sound force gathers momentum and creates vibrations in the ocean of the

mind. When you repeat the mantra millions and billions of times, it permeates every part of your brain and purifies your whole physical, mental and emotional body.
The mantra must be chanted loudly, softly, on the mental plane and on the psychic plane. By practising it at these four levels, kundalini awakens methodically and systematically. You can also use the mantra by repeating it mentally in coordination with the breath, or you can sing it aloud in the form of kirtan. This creates a great potential in mooladhara and awakening takes place.
Closely related to mantra yoga is awakening through sound or music – nada yoga. Here the sounds are the beeja mantras and the music consists of particular melodies corresponding to particular chakras. This is a most tender and absorbing way of awakening.

Tapasya

The third method of awakening is *tapasya*, which means the performance of austerities. Tapasya is a means of purification, a burning or setting on fire so that a process of elimination is created, not in the physical body, but in the mental and emotional bodies. Through this process the mind, the emotions and the whole personality are cleansed of all the dirt, complexes and the patterns of behaviour that cause pain and suffering. Tapasya is an act of purification. It should not be misunderstood to involve standing naked in cold water or snow, or observing foolish and meaningless austerities.
When you want to eliminate a bad habit, the more you try, the more powerful it becomes. When you abandon it in the waking state, it appears in dreams, and when you stop those dreams, it expresses itself in your behaviour or manifests in disease. This particular habit must be destroyed at its psychic root, not only at the conscious level. The samskaras and vasanas must be eliminated by some form of tapasya.
Tapasya is a psychological or psycho-emotional process through which the aspirant tries to set in motion a process of metabolism that will eradicate the habits that create weakness and obstruct the awakening of willpower. "I must do this but I can't." Why does this difference between resolution and implementation arise in the mind of the aspirant? Why is it so great? It is due to a deficiency of will, and that weakness, that distance or barrier between resolution and execution can be removed through regular and repeated practice of tapasya. Then the willpower makes a decision once and the matter is finished. This strength of will is the fruit of tapasya.
The psychology of austerity plays a very important part in the awakening of man's latent power. It is not well understood by modern man who has unfortunately accepted that man lives for the pleasure principle, as propounded by Freud and his disciples. The psychology of austerity is very sound and certainly not abnormal. When the senses are satisfied by the objective pleasures, by the comforts and luxuries, the brain and nervous system become weak and the consciousness and energy undergo a process of regression. It is in this situation that the method of austerity is one of the most powerful and sometimes explosive methods of awakening.
Here the manifestations are tremendous and the aspirant has to face his lower instincts in the beginning. He confronts a lot of temptations and the assaults of the satanic and tamasic forces. All the evil or negative samskaras or karmas of many, many incarnations rise to the surface. Sometimes fear manifests very powerfully or attachment to the world comes with a great force. In some people, sexual fantasies haunt the mind for days together, while others become lean and thin, or even sick. At this juncture, siddhis can appear. One develops extrasensory perceptions, one can read the minds of others, and can suppress others by a thought, or one's own thoughts materialize. In the beginning, black forces manifest and all these siddhis are negative or of a lower quality. Tapasya is a very, very powerful method of awakening which not everybody can handle.

Awakening through herbs

The fourth method of awakening is through the use of specific herbs. In Sanskrit this is called *aushadhi*, and it should not be interpreted as meaning drugs like marijuana, LSD, and so on. Aushadhi is the most powerful and rapid method of awakening, but it is not for all and very few people know about it. There are herbs which can transform the nature of the body and its elements and bring about either partial or full awakening, but they should never be used without a guru or qualified guide. This is because certain herbs selectively awaken ida or pingala and others can suppress both these nadis and quickly lead one to the mental asylum. For this reason, aushadhi is a very risky and unreliable method for awakening.
In the ancient vedic texts of India, there are references to a substance called soma. Soma was a juice extracted from a creeper which was picked on special days of the dark lunar fortnight. It was placed in an earthen pitcher and buried underground until the full moon. Then it was removed and the juice was extracted and taken. This induced visions, experiences and an awakening of higher consciousness.
The Persians knew of another drink, homa, which may have been the same as soma. In Brazil and some of the African countries, people used hallucinogenic mushrooms and in the Himalayan regions marijuana or hashish were taken with the thought that they might provide a shortcut in arousing spiritual awakening. From time to time, in different parts of the world, other things were also discovered and used, some being very mild in effect and others being very concentrated.

With the help of the correct herbs, purified aspirants were able to visualize divine beings, holy rivers, mountains, sacred places, holy people and so on. When the effects of the herbs were more concentrated, they could separate the self from the body and travel astrally. Of course, it was often illusory, but sometimes it was a real experience as well. People were able to enter a state of samadhi and awaken their kundalini. In this particular field of awakening, the sexual instinct was completely eliminated. Therefore, many aspirants preferred this method and have been trying to discover the appropriate herbs for many centuries.

With aushadhi awakening, the body becomes still and quiet, the metabolism slows and the temperature drops. As a result of this, the nerve reflexes function differently and in most cases the aushadhi method of awakening is no longer practised because it was misused by ordinary people who were neither prepared, competent nor qualified. As a result, knowledge of the herbs was withdrawn and today it is a closely guarded secret.

Everyone is craving kundalini awakening, but few people have the discipline and mental, emotional, physical and nervous preparation required to avoid damage to the brain and tissues. So, although no one is teaching the aushadhi method of awakening today, its knowledge has been transmitted from generation to generation through the gurudisciple tradition. Perhaps some day, when the nature of man changes and we find better intellectual, physical and mental responses, the science may again be revealed.

Raja yoga

The fifth method of inducing awakening is through raja yoga and the development of an equipoised mind. This is the total merging of individual consciousness with superconsciousness. It occurs by a sequential process of concentration, meditation and communion; experience of union with the absolute or supreme.

All the practices of raja yoga, preceded by hatha yoga, bring about very mild and durable experiences, but they can lead to a state of complete depression, in which you do not feel like doing anything. The raja yoga method is very difficult for the majority of people as it requires time, patience, discipline and perseverance. Concentration of mind is one of the most difficult things for people of today to achieve. It cannot be undertaken before the mind has been stabilized, the karmas deactivated and the emotions purified through the practices of karma yoga and bhakti yoga. It is the nature of the mind to remain active all the time, and this constitutes a very real danger for people of our time, because when we try to concentrate the mind we create a split. Therefore, the majority of us should only practise concentration up to a certain point.

Following awakening through raja yoga, changes take place in the aspirant. One may transcend hunger and all addictions or habits. The sensualities of life are no longer appealing, hunger and the sexual urge diminish and detachment develops spontaneously. Raja yoga brings about a slow transformation of consciousness.

Pranayama

The sixth method of awakening kundalini is through pranayama. When a sufficiently prepared aspirant practises intense pranayama in a calm, cool and quiet environment, preferably at a high altitude, with a diet only sufficient to maintain life, the awakening of kundalini takes place like an explosion. In fact, the awakening is so rapid that kundalini ascends to sahasrara immediately.

Pranayama is not only a breathing exercise or a means to increase prana in the body; it is a powerful method of creating yogic fire to heat the kundalini and awaken it. However, if it is practised without sufficient preparation, this will not occur because the generated heat will not be directed to the proper centres. Therefore, jalandhara, uddiyana and moola bandhas are practised to lock the prana in and force it up to the frontal brain.

When pranayama is practised correctly, the mind is automatically conquered. However, the effects of pranayama are not that simple to manage. It creates extra heat in the body, it awakens some of the centres in the brain and it can hinder the production of sperm and testosterone. Pranayama may also lower the temperature of the inner body and even bring down the rate of respiration and alter the brain waves. Unless you have practised the shatkarmas first and purified the body to a degree, when these changes take place, you may not be able to handle them.

There are two important ways of awakening kundalini – the direct method and the indirect. Pranayama is the direct method. The experiences it brings about are explosive and results are attained very quickly. Expansion is rapid and the mind attains quick metamorphosis. However, this form of kundalini awakening is always accompanied by certain experiences, and for one who is not sufficiently prepared mentally, philosophically, physically and emotionally, these experiences can be terrifying. Therefore, although the path of pranayama is a jetset method, it is drastic and is considered to be a very difficult one that everybody cannot manage.

Kriya yoga

The seventh method of inducing awakening is kriya yoga. It is the most simple and practical way for the modern day individual as it does not require confrontation with the mind. Sattwic people may be able to awaken kundalini through raja yoga, but those who have a tumultuous, noisy, rajasic mind will not succeed this way. They will only develop more tensions, guilt and complexes, and may even become schizophrenic. For such people kriya yoga is by far the best and most effective system.

When you practise kriya yoga, kundalini does not wake up with force, nor does it awaken like a satellite or as a vision or experience. It wakes up like a noble queen. Before getting up she will open her eyes, then close them again for a while. Then she will open her eyes again, look here and there, turn to the right and left, then pull the sheet up over her head and doze. After some time she will again stretch her body and open her eyes, then doze for a while. Each time she stretches and looks around she says, "Hmmm." This is what happens in kriya yoga awakening.

Sometimes you feel very grand and sometimes you do not feel quite right. Sometimes you pay too much attention to the things of life and sometimes you think everything is useless. Sometimes you eat extravagantly and sometimes you do not eat for days together. Sometimes you have sleepless nights and at other times you do nothing but sleep and sleep. All these signs of awakening and reversion, awakening and reversion keep coming every now and then. Kriya yoga does not create an explosive awakening. However, it can bring visions and other very mild and controllable experiences.

Tantric initiation

This eighth method of awakening kundalini through tantric initiation is a very secret topic. Only those people who have transcended passions, and who understand the two principles of nature, Shiva and Shakti, are entitled to this initiation. It is not meant for those who have urges lurking within them or for those who have a need for physical contact. With the guidance of a guru, this is the quickest possible way to awaken kundalini. There are no extraordinary experiences or feelings and there is no neurosis; everything seems quite normal, but at the same time, without your knowledge, awakening is taking place. Transformation takes place and your awareness expands, but you do not know it. In this particular system, awakening and arriving at sahasrara are the same event. It takes just three seconds. However, who is qualified for this path? Few people in this world have completely transcended the sexual urge and overcome their passions.

Shaktipat

The ninth method of awakening is performed by the guru. It is called shaktipat. The awakening is instant, but it is only a glimpse, not a permanent event. When the guru creates this awakening you experience samadhi. You can practise all forms of pranayama and all asanas, mudras and bandhas without having learned them or prepared for them. All the mantras are revealed to you and you know the scriptures from within. Changes take place in the physical body in an instant. The skin becomes very soft, the eyes glow and the body emits a particular aroma which is neither agreeable nor disagreeable.

This shaktipat can be conducted in the physical presence or from a distance. It can be transmitted by touch, by a handkerchief, a mala, a flower, a fruit or anything edible, depending on the system the guru has mastered. It can even be transmitted by letter, telegram or telephone.

It is very difficult to say who is qualified for this awakening. You may have lived the life of a renunciate for fifty years, but still you may not get it. You may be just an ordinary person, living a non-spiritual life, eating all kinds of junk foods, but the guru may give you shaktipat. Your eligibility for shaktipat does not depend on your social or immediate conduct, but on the point of evolution you have reached. There is a point in evolution beyond which shaktipat becomes effective, but this evolution is not intellectual, emotional, social or religious. It is a spiritual evolution which has nothing to do with the way we live, eat, behave or think, because generally we do these things not because of our evolvement, but according to the way we have been brought up and educated.

Self-surrender

We have discussed the nine established methods of awakening kundalini, but there is a tenth way – do not aspire for awakening. Let it happen if it happens: "I am not responsible for the awakening, nature is accomplishing everything. I accept what comes to me." This is known as the path of self-surrender, and in this path, if you have a strong enough belief that your kundalini will indeed awaken, twenty thousand years can pass in the twinkling of an eye and kundalini will awaken instantly.

Effects of the different methods of awakening

When the awakening of kundalini takes place, scientific observations have revealed different effects. Those who have awakened kundalini from birth do not register any emotional changes. They are like blocks of wood. Those who have awakened kundalini through pranayama have a great quantum of electrical charges in the spinal column and throughout the body, and momentarily they could manifest schizophrenically in an individual.

Karma yoga and bhakti yoga are considered comparatively safe and mild methods of awakening, but the tantric methods are more scientific than the non-tantric methods, because in tantra there is no scope for suppression or dispersion of energy. In non-tantric methods there is antagonism; one part of the mind wants it and another part of the same mind is saying no. You suppress your thoughts, you want to enjoy, but at the same time you think, "No, it is bad."

I am not criticizing non-tantric methods. They are the mild methods which do not bring you any trouble. They are just like beer, you drink a little bit and nothing happens. If you drink four to ten glasses not much will happen. But tantric methods are like LSD, you have a little and it takes you right out. If something is wrong, it is wrong; if something is right, it is right.

Preparing for the Awakening

W ithout a guru you can practise any form of yoga, but not kundalini. This is an extremely powerful system. Kundalini yoga does not start suddenly or with fits. You do not have to make any substantial changes in your way of life, but you must begin to practise.

Do not start with advanced practices; you should train and prepare the physical body for some time, then go to the mind and gradually explore the deeper levels. Before commencing the practices which bring about the actual awakening of kundalini, you must prepare yourself step by step on the physical, mental and emotional planes. If you are patient and prepare correctly, awakening of kundalini will definitely take place.

Adequate preparation is necessary to ensure that one has the strength to bear the impact of full awakening of the mighty potential force within. Most of us do not even have control over our physical manifestations and behaviours. If you were given a sleep inducing injection, you would become drowsy whether you wanted to or not. This is because you have no control over the processes and actions of your brain and you do not know how to control sleep. Similarly, if you have a headache, you are unable to exert control over it. When physical manifestations such as sleep and pain are not under your control, what would happen if other manifestations began to occur in your brain? You would not be able to control them. Therefore, before kundalini awakens, it is important that you are able to manage the mind.

If you can maintain a balanced mind in the face of mental and emotional conflicts, and you can endure anger, worry, love and passion, disappointment, jealousy, hatred, memories of the past, sufferings and sorrows, you are ready for the awakening. If you can still feel joy when the scales are heavily loaded against you, you are an aspirant for kundalini yoga. Before you bring into use a generator of five megawatts, you must have a factory ready to utilize the energy. In the same way, before you awaken kundalini shakti, you must be able to merge yourself with the higher spirit and you must know how to utilize the creative energy of kundalini.

So if you want to follow the path of kundalini yoga, it is absolutely essential to have a guru with whom you feel intimate. Many people say the guru is within, but are they able to communicate, understand and follow the intricate instructions? If so, it is possible to proceed with this internal guidance, but few people have such a relationship with the inner guru. They need an external guru first who will connect them with the inner guru. If you have a guru, he will help you to prepare for kundalini awakening. He will be there if you need any advice and he will guide you through the crisis of awakening.

Usually, because we are religious minded people, our relationship with the guru is based on a sort of formality. To us he is worshipful, respectable, superior and supreme, but at the time of awakening, all these attitudes to the guru must be set aside. At this time you must evolve a more intimate attitude, as if your relationship was based on love, not merely devotion and worship. When you serve your mother you do so with an attitude of love, not respect and veneration. With this same attitude you should serve the guru, then his direct influence is upon you. Then, if there is excitement in any chakra, the relationship with the guru will balance it.

The relationship between guru and disciple is the most intimate of relationships; it is neither a religious nor a legal relationship. Guru and disciple live like an object and its shadow. The guru is the best thing in spiritual life, and if you have a guru you are very fortunate. However, it is sometimes difficult to find a guru. If you do not have a guru, you can cultivate a mental picture of him, try to feel his guidance and continue practising faithfully. You will surely succeed.

The time factor

Preparation is not the job of one lifetime. Man strives spiritually lifetime after lifetime. In fact, this body is given to you only for that purpose. For eating, sleeping and sexual interaction a human body is not necessary, so in our lower stages of evolution we had an animal body. However, even with this human body, we still have animal in us, so these natural urges follow us. Let them, but remember this body is not for their fulfilment alone. In this human body the consciousness is the most important point. Man is aware of his awareness and he does not only think, he knows that he thinks. The evolution of awareness has been going on life after life.

And what you have been practising for your spiritual life in the last five to ten years is in addition to what you have already done.
Supposing your children are studying in primary school and you are transferred to another city. Where will your children begin their education in the new city? Right from the beginning? No, from the point where they left their studies. The same thing happens in reincarnation. That is why, even though you may have brothers and sisters born of the same mother and father, they will be different from you. In your previous incarnation your preferences were different from theirs. Maybe after a few incarnations they may come to the point where you are now. So we cannot say how long preparation takes, because this life is one of those milestones and you have left behind many, many milestones.
However, if you are eager to awaken kundalini and the chakras, you should not be in a hurry. Set apart twelve years of your life for this purpose. This is not to say that the awakening cannot be brought about within one, two or three years – it can be. Total awakening can even take place in a month, or the guru can give you awakening in one day, but you will be unable to hold and sustain the awakening. When one is in possession of a weak mind which cannot sustain even a little bit of cheerfulness or excitement, or bear the death of a spouse or separation from a loved one, how can one sustain the tremendous force of an awakened kundalini? Therefore, the twelve years are not for the actual awakening. The twelve years are only for preparation so you can hold and sustain the awakening.

Where to begin

The practices of kundalini yoga are intended to create the awareness, not necessarily to awaken kundalini. First of all, we have to decide whether kundalini is already awakened. It may already be on the way and you are opening the garage and there is no car because it is already on the highway. When you go to satsang, do some kirtan or lead a yogic lifestyle, you begin to have experiences and you realize something is happening to you. Then, when you discuss kundalini and the chakras with a guru you start to understand.
The practices that you do develop your awareness and help you to remember your connection with your past evolution. They remove the veil which separates this current incarnation from the previous one. I will give you a very gross example.
There was a boy who was the only son of a very rich man. The boy went crazy and was sent to a mental hospital. He ran away and used to go from house to house begging for food. He did not know that his parents had died and he had inherited a large estate, cars and shops and a lot of money in fixed deposits. One day his uncle found him and had him treated properly. The boy recovered from his mental illness and remembered everything about his heritage. Similarly, there is a process of remembering, and when it takes place, you know exactly where you stand.
So, practices are necessary to remove the veil in front of the consciousness which separates the two lives. Once you know that your kundalini is already in the process of transition, then practices are of no real use. If you are practising, it is because you are forced to, and if you are not practising, it is because you are forced not to. During the period of transition of kundalini the practices are not useless, but your efforts to practise them are of no use. However, if there is no awakening, if kundalini is in mooladhara or swadhisthana or in between the two, then that is the time for the practices which are enjoined in the books.
It is very important that you awaken sushumna nadi before kundalini. This essential point has not been stressed clearly in any books, but Swami Sivananda hinted at it in his writings. If sushumna is not opened, where will the shakti go? It will pass through either ida or pingala and complications will arise.
You must also undergo purification of the tattwas or elements, and purification of the chakras and nadis. Otherwise, when kundalini awakens there will be a traffic jam. Asanas, pranayama and the hatha yoga shatkarmas provide the best means of purification. Surya namaskara and surya bheda pranayama purify pingala nadi and the shatkarmas and pranayama will purify and awaken sushumna. There are specific asanas that are very important for purifying the nadis and inducing a mild awakening in the chakras. So, start with purification of the tattwas by the hatha yoga cleansing techniques. Take up asanas next and then pranayama. Later you can practise mudras and bandhas and then begin kriya yoga.

Awakening before preparation

If experiences commence before you are properly prepared, you should immediately start to prepare yourself. The first thing to do is start fasting or switch to a light diet. You should also live quietly and avoid social interactions, reading books and magazines. Of course, during this period you must not take any drugs or medicines and you must guard against introducing any chemicals into the body.
If you minimize your interactions with the world outside, the experiences will subside after five or six days and you can resume your normal life. You should then start searching for someone who can give you further guidance.

Proceed to an ashram

When you know that kundalini is arousing, as soon as you can, you should retire to a congenial place. As far as I know, the only congenial place is an ashram, where you can be with a guru and like-minded people. An ashram is a community where the inmates have plenty of work, no attachments, no hatred or prejudices, a simple life, little to eat, no comforts or luxuries, only the bare essentials. There are no social expectations and pressures in an ashram, no fashion, no show, no useless conversations, no interference and gossip.

If you live in an ashram, the awakening of kundalini can be streamlined and if a mental crisis occurs, you are free to experience whatever happens. If you do not want to eat, it is okay; if you cannot sleep and you just want to sit, it is all right; if you have emotional problems or no emotions at all, people will understand and leave you alone.

If you stay with your family during the crisis period, they may send you off to a mental hospital. If you do not feel like eating, they will say, "Not eating today?" When they see you have not eaten for a few days, they will say, "Something is wrong with her," and they will try to get you to see a doctor or psychiatrist. Or if you are married, when your behaviour seems a little strange, your partner might be ready to divorce you. So it is much better to get away from such places. That is why there are so many monasteries and ashrams all over the world today.

What to practise in the ashram

In the ashram you should practise purification of the physical body through the shatkarmas to balance the acid, wind and mucus in the body. Physical and mental purification will also take place on account of the pure and simple ashram diet. The physical body must be kept very, very light and made sattwic and entirely free of toxins.

If you are a bhakta by temperament, spend your time in prayer, singing kirtan or bhajan. If you are an intellectual, then read books, talk minimally, practise hatha yoga and fast from time to time. If you are a very active person, work hard and dedicate yourself to karma yoga.

It is also necessary to perfect the sitting posture, as you must be able to sit comfortably in one of the three postures: siddhasana/siddha yoni asana, padmasana or vajrasana. The best and most powerful of these postures is siddhasana/ siddha yoni asana.

Some people think they should practise a lot of meditation or pranayama when kundalini is ascending so it will go straight to sushumna. However, I do not think meditation is necessary anymore, because when kundalini is in the process of transition, you can do nothing with your mind. If your mind is agitated, you can do nothing about it because that is the effect of the awakening of kundalini. It is not the effect of your practice.

The movement of consciousness during the transition of kundalini is spontaneous, whether it is depression, a state of trance, an experience or vision, a feeling or sensation in the body; you cannot alter any of them. They will continue because they are forced on you, they are evolving in you because you are passing through that stage. But if you live in the non agitating ashram environment and partake of ashram food and share in the karma yoga, there will be no disturbances in your experiences.

Regarding pranayama or kriyas, when the experience is moving onwards, pranayama happens by itself, you do not have to think about what to do. Sometimes kevala kumbhaka takes place, or you automatically begin to practise bhastrika or ujjayi. Moola bandha or vajroli mudra happen by themselves, or you begin to do asanas spontaneously. So you do not have to worry, just follow the flow of experience and take care of your environment and food, and make sure nobody disturbs you.

The role of karma yoga

Karma yoga is a very important part of spiritual life. Even if you practise austerities or mantra, use herbs, practise pranayama, undergo tantric initiation or get shaktipat, or are born with an awakened kundalini, if you do not follow the path of karma yoga, your evolution will definitely be retarded at some point.

If you have a good, strong, reliable automobile but the road is bumpy and covered in rocks, pebbles and marsh, try to accelerate and then see what happens. It is very important that the mind is prepared and the personality is rendered ready. Samskaras, positive and negative, must be exhausted, awareness must be extended to every level, dedication or consecration must be perfected and your attachments, illusions and infatuations must be spotted, scrutinized and analyzed. All that is not possible without doing karma yoga.

Karma yoga is not directly responsible for the awakening of kundalini, but without its practice, kundalini cannot budge even one centimetre. Therefore, you can understand how important karma yoga is in the life of a disciple. You must read a lot about karma yoga in the Bhagavad Gita, for perhaps that is the only philosophical and yogic explanation of karma yoga.

The need for discipline

Some people who have awakened kundalini look quite abnormal, and they behave in a peculiar way. They are very disorganized, unsystematic and totally confused, and you cannot understand what they are doing. Therefore, in yoga you are advised to discipline yourself right from the beginning, so that when kundalini wakes up you remain disciplined. Otherwise you might go out to the street and just lie down there in a heap.

Sometimes I used to feel like this. When I was living in Rishikesh with my guru, I decided to visit the Ganga each morning and cross it five times, swimming through the icy cold water. One day Swami Sivananda called me and said, "Are you going to continue with your swimming or am I going to put you out of this ashram?" This brought me back to my senses.

Life has to be disciplined so that when kundalini awakens you can remain unconfused. You have to discharge your responsibilities. You have to go to the office, bank, shops, and drive a car as well. Not everybody can become a swami or stay in an ashram.

Specific recommendations

If the awakening of kundalini takes place through birth, pranayama, tantric initiation or shaktipat, you do not have to know anything. In these situations everything is beyond control; whether things go right or wrong; you are helpless. But when awakening takes place through the other methods, there are certain steps to take.

Except in tantric initiation, sexual obligations have to be kept at bay. Food should be minimal, light and pure. One must have a guru and seek his guidance. Isolation from people is also very important.

Often when kundalini awakens the person develops some sort of power. Some aspirants can materialize things, see clairvoyantly, hear clairaudiently or read the minds of others. When you are amongst many people, it becomes a great temptation to exercise these powers. This can be dangerous. Whereas some people will not care if you can read their mind, others will feel it is a great impingement on their privacy and may even want to shoot you. People get scared at the exhibition of siddhis, so if you are facing any psychic manifestations, you will have to control them by force.

The great Tibetan yogi, Milarepa, learned certain forms of magic, and when he developed powers, he took revenge on his uncle and relatives. He created hailstorms that destroyed crops, huts and even lives, because he was then an ordinary man with love and hatred, friends and enemies. As long as you have likes and dislikes, you must not know what psychic powers you have. Milarepa had to perform penance for his misdeeds and suffer a lot at the hands of his guru.

Awakening by mantra and the need for seclusion

When awakening takes place by mantra, you will have to adjust your diet and retire from sexual obligations, not permanently, but for a while. From time to time it is also beneficial if you enter total seclusion. Twice a year is sufficient. In the beginning, start with one complete day, then increase to three days, and when you are used to it, extend to a maximum period of nine days. It is preferable if you practise seclusion when it is neither too hot nor too cold.

During your first day of seclusion, observe silence and eat very light food and very little. Do not meditate or try to concentrate. From morning until evening, with a few breaks here and there, only practise your mantra on a mala. Do not do it with exertion or strain, and if you become introverted, stop it. Maintain your mental concept with the external experiences; do not aspire for an introverted meditative state. If introversion forces itself, keep your eyes open. Practise this for twelve hours, but not in one stretch. For the last hour you must sit in meditation.

Next time you go into seclusion, do so for three to nine days. During this period devote as much time as possible to the repetition, resolution and reflection of the mantra. On the last day, at the end of the process, sit quietly for one hour of meditation.

Seclusion is actually recommended for all who are undergoing awakening of kundalini. At that time it is best to retire from active life and family environments for at least forty five days. Unless you are in semi seclusion from the world at the time of awakening, as well as having strange experiences and hallucinations, you may have peculiar doubts, fears, anger and strong passions.

Sadhus always live in seclusion because when there are interactions with people, so many thought currents move in the mind. Mixing with people, talking and gossiping create crosscurrents of love, hatred, infatuation, likes and dislikes, restlessness, worry and anxiety, desires and passions. Therefore, if you are practising a lot of sadhana, or you are facing the awakening of kundalini, do not have very much interaction with people. You will then be spared a lot of mental turmoil.

Diet for Kundalini Awakening

When the awakening of kundalini takes place, it is important to have the correct diet, as food influences the mind and your nature. At the time of awakening, certain physiological changes occur in the body, particularly in the digestive system, and the digestive process is frequently disturbed, or hunger vanishes completely. Therefore, a kundalini aspirant has to be very careful about his diet.

Scientific observations have shown that the awakening of kundalini is generally accompanied by a state of

nervous depression. The inner body temperature undergoes erratic changes and drops so much that it becomes much lower than the outer body temperature. Metabolism slows down and sometimes it even stops completely. Consumption of oxygen also falls. Therefore, when you are experiencing kundalini awakening your diet must be very light and easy to assimilate.

The best diet for a kundalini yogi is boiled food. Crushed wheat, barley, lentils and dal are excellent foods, particularly when they are in a liquid form. Fats and greasy foods should be avoided and protein should be kept to a minimum. This will take any strain off the liver, because when the mind undergoes a crisis, the liver is overtaxed.

It is advisable to increase the carbohydrates in your diet, for example, rice, wheat, maize, barley, potato, etc., because carbohydrates help to maintain the inner body temperature and they do not require much heat to digest. Eggs, chicken and other heavy foods do not produce much heat themselves, but they require heat for digestion.

The yogic diet is macrobiotic, simple, plain and relatively bland. From time to time, fruit and roots can also be taken, but they are not essential.

Dietary misconceptions

A great misunderstanding has taken place in the last twenty to thirty years, which is that a yogi should only take milk, fruit and raw vegetables. On the basis of personal observation, trial and error, I cannot accept that this is correct. There are certain foods which are not meant for the human body at all. If you analyze your digestive and salivary secretions and the durability of the mucous membranes in the alimentary canal, you will find that they are not really meant for digesting meat and uncooked foods. Whereas carnivorous animals have short intestines so that their food can be expelled quickly, before fermentation takes place, we have very long intestines (thirty six feet in length) and our food should take eighteen hours to pass through the body. As well cooked vegetarian food is less likely to ferment, and we can keep it in our intestines for a full eighteen hours, it is the best for the human digestive tract.

Of course, this is not to say that people who have a non vegetarian diet cannot awaken their kundalini, as history indicates otherwise. There have been many Christian, Tibetan and Sufi saints who awakened their kundalini although they had a meat diet, and we cannot say what Christ, Moses, Mohammed and Buddha ate. However, from scientific observations made in the event of kundalini awakening, we know what is likely to occur in our body. At certain periods we may not be able to digest raw foods and there may be days when the body cannot even accept water. Therefore, during the period of kundalini awakening, please have a diet which can be easily assimilated and eat the bare minimum for existence. Do not live to eat, but eat to live.

The essence of food

The food we eat is not merely to satisfy our taste. Every food item has an essence in it, and in yoga we call this sattwa. Sattwa means the ultimate essence of food, but please do not mistake this for vitamins or minerals. Sattwa is the more subtle form of food. When you eat for the sake of taste or enjoyment, instead of extracting the sattwa you only get the gross things. This is why the yogis and saints of all traditions have always lived on the minimum possible amount of food during periods of sadhana.

When we overeat we create a burden for the digestive system, and when the digestive system is overburdened we are unable to extract the sattwa from the food. Sattwa is a substance which nourishes the thoughts and nervous system. When the thoughts are fed with sattwa they are more refined and pure, and one is able to live in higher consciousness. Therefore, it is beneficial for a sadhaka to fast from time to time. When the body is kept light and pure, it is far more capable of extracting the sattwa from food.

The use of condiments

In the diet for kundalini aspirants, condiments have a very important role to play. Condiments such as coriander, cumin seeds, turmeric, aniseed, black pepper, green pepper, cayenne, cloves, mustard seed, cardamom, cinnamon and so on are also called digestives, as they aid digestion. These substances are not spices for taste; they are condiments which have the same properties as the enzymes in the body, and by helping to break down the food for digestion, they conserve vital energy and help to maintain the body's internal temperature.

When we talk about diet, let us not do so in puritanical terms. We must remember only one point in this case, to be sure the body is capable of digesting all the food. Having made a thorough study of natural foods and having tried them on myself, I have come to the conclusion that a combination of natural and macrobiotic foods is best. I have also discovered that instead of cooking the food in your stomach, it is best to cook it properly in the pan. Five or six condiments should be added during cooking to liberate the enzymes and chemicals which enhance digestion. The combination of heat, condiments and enzymes breaks down the food into smaller and more basic components, making it easier to digest.

Yoga and diet are independent sciences

Although diet is an independent science, it is definitely related to every system of yoga. Of course, the ideal diet varies from yoga to yoga. A hatha yogi who has been practising shankhaprakshalana will not be able to eat lots of red peppers and black peppers or he will die. The diet regime for a karma yoga, a bhakta yogi, raja yogi, hatha yogi and kriya yogi will not be the same.

A bhakta yogi can eat all types of sweets and confectionery, consume cheese, butter, milk, etc. and he can eat and eat because his metabolism is very fast. Similarly, a karma yogi can take cheese, coffee, raw food or cooked food, and even a little bit of champagne, because he is working hard physically and his metabolism is also very fast. But in raja yoga and kundalini awakening, the metabolism becomes slow and you have to be very careful about your diet and how much you consume.

Over the years I have done a lot of work on food because I run ashrams where I have to manage all the affairs in relation to money, labour and the spiritual welfare of the ashram inmates. As it is not possible to provide different types of diets for the various aspirants of yoga, I have evolved two wonderful foods which suit everybody. One is for those who like rice and the other is for those who prefer wheat. You either cook the rice with dal (pulses such as lentils), vegetables and a few condiments, or you pound the wheat, add all the same ingredients to that and cook it well. I call this 'integrated khichari'. You can add anything to it and it is all right. This is the cheapest and most nutritious of all the foods I have eaten in any part of the world. You can also eat as much khichari as you want without any fear, because it digests so smoothly. This diet is suitable for all yoga practitioners and it is ideal for those who are ranging high in spiritual life and are about to merge into the ultimate state. For one who is serious about yoga practices and spiritual aspirations in life, diet is as important as yoga, but if you are only worried about your diet and are not practising yoga, then you may be called a fanatic.

Risks and Precautions

The awakening of kundalini is a very important, pleasant and historical experience in a person's life. If you can see and experience something more than what you can generally see and experience through your senses, you are indeed fortunate. However, at the same time, if you have such experiences without adequate preparation, you may be startled, frightened and confused. Therefore, before the actual awakening of kundalini occurs, it is better to experience some mild awakenings in the chakras first.

Nowadays, if you travel by motor car at a very high speed, you do not really feel anything unusual, but if a person did it a hundred years ago when there was no adaptation to speed, he would have felt very giddy. Similarly, if a sudden awakening takes place and you are not used to the experience, you may become disoriented. You will not be able to cope with the radical changes in perception or with the contents of the unconscious mind welling up into the consciousness. But if you have been practising hatha yoga and meditation, and have experienced slight awakenings previously, you will be better able to cope with it.

When the body in totality is purified by the practices of shatkarma and hatha yoga, when the mind is purified by mantra, when the pranas are brought under control through the practices of pranayama and the diet is pure and yogic, at that time, awakening of kundalini takes place without any danger or accident. But with those who are in a hurry to awaken kundalini and who take to any practice in a haphazard manner without going through the preliminaries, and who do not take care of their diet, there will be some problems because they do not know how to control and utilize the fantastic energy they are unleashing.

The question of risk

There are so many whispers about the dangers of awakening and dark hints about people going crazy or developing disturbing powers, but everything in life is risky and there are far more dangers in ordinary daily life than you will encounter on the path of kundalini. Every time you walk across the street or travel by car or plane, you take a risk. In the pursuit of desires, passions and ambitions, people take great risks every day without thinking twice about it. Yet they allow the relatively minor risk of kundalini to deter them from pursuing the supreme goal of higher consciousness.

When a woman discovers she is pregnant, does she think it might be dangerous for her to have a child? She might die! She may have to have a caesarean! She may lose her figure for life! She may become seriously ill! Does a woman think like this and decide she does not want a child at all? No. Then why think like this about kundalini?

Awakening of kundalini is the birth of Christ, Krishna, Buddha or Mohammed. It is one of the greatest events of human life, just as for a mother to have a baby is one of the major and happiest events of her life, no matter what the consequences. In the same way, awakening of kundalini is one of the greatest events in the life of a yogi. It is the destiny of mankind, so why not go ahead with it?

Without involving yourself in a risk, nothing great in life can be achieved. Every great yogi, scientist,

explorer and adventurer has faced risks and in this way has invented, discovered or made progress. People who think and talk about risks are cowards, and should not even practise yoga. It is better they eat, drink, be merry and die unenlightened.

Kundalini practices are certainly no more dangerous than many activities people engage in for the sake of thrills, sport or altered states of consciousness. The risks are not nearly as great as those associated with LSD, hashish, marijuana and alcohol, which are used by many people every day. Those who practise kundalini yoga are assured of attaining states of expanded consciousness which are safer, smoother, more comprehensible and longer lasting than anything that can be obtained through the use of psychedelics.

The science of kundalini yoga has its own inbuilt safety mechanisms. If you perform asanas or pranayama incorrectly, nature will immediately send a warning and compel you to stop practising. In the same way, when kundalini awakening takes place and you are not prepared to face it, nature puts obstacles in your way. If ever you become scared and want to stop the process of kundalini awakening, all you have to do is revert to a gross lifestyle. Just revise all your passions, dreams and worldly ambitions.

Unless you are an extremely introverted person, you can proceed along the path of kundalini yoga without fear. If you are hypersensitive, have difficulty communicating with others and live within a sort of fantasy world, you will find kundalini yoga upsetting and dangerous. Such people should not practise kundalini yoga or any techniques for exploring the inner world until they have developed the ability to strike fearlessly and confidently through the outer world. This also applies to timid and dependent people. For all these individuals, karma yoga is the way. They should lead a life of unselfish service in the world and develop nonattachment and maximum awareness.

Fear of mistakes

Some people worry about kundalini ascending through the wrong nadi, but there is no danger here because if kundalini enters through any other nadi, the whole circuit will fuse. If kundalini has awakened but a chakra is blocked, say swadhisthana, then the kundalini will only roam about in mooladhara and all the instincts of that chakra will develop. You will become a high class animal for a while and may develop some siddhis. If there is any obstruction in the chakras beyond that, the energy will be blocked for a long time, affecting the psychological constitution. If kundalini enters into the pranic nadi, pingala, it could set the whole brain into turmoil. However, this does not usually happen. Nature intervenes, and unless sushumna is clear, the chakra will not open and the energy will not be able to move further.

Mistakes do occur, but not in average individuals because they are scared of something wrong happening somewhere. If they are practising and suddenly feel they are going crazy, they will discontinue their practices immediately. So, every individual possesses a sort of fear. Before anything wrong can happen totally, man takes care of himself. However, there are some blockheads and very stuffy people who plod on no matter what happens. They do not care about the consequences and these are the people who generally get themselves into trouble.

Kundalini awakening and illness

If you take care of all the requirements, then no illness will come to you. However, many people are very hasty and impatient. When they want to make money, they want to make it overnight, quickly, and the same psychology is transferred into spiritual life: quick money and quick realization. With this impatience, sometimes we will overstep the necessary prerequisites.

Some people develop weakness of the lower limbs because they have not trained their body through hatha yoga. Some develop digestive disorders because they have not understood the relationship between food and the temperature of the body. Therefore, the prerequisites have to be observed. Those who suffer do so not because of the kundalini awakening, but because they have not harmonized the nervous system.

Through hatha yoga you must create a balance between the two forces in the physical body, the pranic and the mental. Even in modern times we say that a balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems is absolutely essential to develop the higher faculties of the brain. When there is an imbalance between these two forces, that is, if one is predominant and the other subservient, then you are supplying one energy in excess and the other energy is deficient. This inevitably leads to sickness.

Airing the unconscious

In the course of your practices there may be isolated awakenings in ajna chakra, in which the awareness enters the realms of the unconscious mind and you see figures, symbols and even monsters or benevolent beings. You may hear or experience many inexplicable things, but they are all simply products of your own unconscious mind and should be regarded as nothing more. With the awakening of psychic consciousness, the symbols belonging to your own personality come out. When this happens you may have a problem understanding it, but just remember that these kinds of expressions are simply parts of your being which have been lying in reserve and they have to 'come out for airing'.

You should not fear kundalini awakening, but you must be prepared for the events that may occur. Otherwise, if you have a weak mind and are confronted by fear, it could lead to mental derangement. So, before you attempt kundalini awakening you should undergo a process of thought purification and develop understanding of your way of thinking.

When the prerequisites for kundalini awakening are followed properly, psychological and psychoemotional symptoms do not occur. In fact, all these things happen before the actual event of kundalini awakening. But of course, when the awakening takes place, an aspirant who is not maintaining the proper discipline that is required is bound to get into some psychological cobwebs.

The awakening of kundalini should never be equated with obsessions or neurosis. When an explosion takes place it brings out whatever was in you. If you have a personality full of obsessions and mental blocks, then it is going to explode. Therefore, before one attempts awakening of kundalini, one must have arrived at a point of purity of consciousness or clarity of mind, chitta shuddhi.

Purity of consciousness is not religious terminology. You may have pure thoughts in your mind, but you may not be pure at all. You may be thinking about purity, chastity, compassion, charity and generosity, but in the subterranean plane of your personality there may be conflicts or other unresolved mental problems. When the mind enters into meditation or samadhi, this subterranean level comes up to the surface. You begin to see all the debris and you feel it and enact it. This can happen at anytime, when you are dreaming, when you are in a state of craziness and when kundalini is waking.

That is why a relentless effort should be made to render the mind free from all the disturbing archetypes or samskaras before you try to handle this project. An integration of karma, bhakti and raja yoga, tempered with hatha and jnana yoga, must be adopted first.

Purity and impurity

Although I recommend chitta shuddhi, I know that many people have an obsession about purity and impurity. They keep thinking they are impure and therefore they should not try to awaken kundalini. But when the sun rises, what happens to the darkness? Purity and impurity are ethical and moral concepts created by society and religion. Awakening of kundalini is the awakening of the great light within mankind. It rises like the sun, and when it can be seen on the horizon there will be no darkness, no pain, suffering, disappointment or impurity.

Siddhis and the ego factor

When one has been practising kundalini yoga for a couple of years and suddenly starts having beautiful experiences, one tends to think oneself superior to everybody else and may even consider oneself as godly. To protect yourself from this, you must place yourself in the calibre of chela or disciple. A disciple remains a disciple, there is no promotion. Many people think that after twelve years of discipleship they will be promoted to guruhood, but this is not so.

In the path of kundalini yoga it is very important that you live the life of a disciple even after the awakening of kundalini, and not only after that, but even when Shiva and Shakti have united.

The path of kundalini yoga is the means for attaining supreme awareness and enlightenment, but if you get lost in the beauty of kundalini, you may not reach enlightenment. When, at a certain stage of awakening, the mind becomes very efficient and siddhis such as telepathy, clairvoyance, hypnotism, spiritual healing and so on manifest, some aspirants take that to be a divine accomplishment and begin to think, "Now I am God." Then, in the name of doing good to everybody, they start performing all sorts of funny magic. This feeds the ego, and in the course of time, their ignorance becomes very great.

There is extreme danger here and many aspirants get caught. Their ego becomes tremendously gross and they develop a strong feeling of grandeur. And that is as far as they get. Although there is nothing really wrong with psychic powers, those whose seek them must know that they can completely destroy their spiritual consciousness if they are not disciplined. You can become lost in these powers, just as some people get lost in money, beauty, intellect and so on. These parapsychological attainments are momentary; they live with you for only a short period of time and then you lose them. They are only additional properties to be experienced and left behind in the wake of the dawning of supreme awareness.

It is important to remember what Maharishi Patanjali has said in the *Yoga Sutras*: "All these psychic manifestations are obstacles which block the free flow of consciousness towards samadhi."

Two opposing forces

In the realms of higher consciousness, there are both divine and demonical forces. Both these forces can be brought down to earth by the same techniques. Without higher awareness, when the awakening of the chakras begins, the knowledge and destructive energy of the atom bomb might be unleashed, rather than the wisdom and spiritual power of the rishis. When kundalini awakens in a person with no dispassion and

discrimination, who does not seek liberation and does not know the reality of this world, the consequences can be disastrous. Ultimately, that person will destroy himself, and possibly many others in the process. Therefore, a kundalini aspirant must constantly work towards the development of higher awareness. To be conscious of the unconscious is very difficult. When your awareness is heavy and burdened with tension and confusion, it cannot survive for long in the unconscious state. But when your consciousness is light and clear, it can penetrate into the unconscious like a sharp and speedy arrow, successfully navigating past all the danger zones and emerging with higher knowledge.

Anyone who has the urge to expand his or her awareness is a pioneer. In this we are emerging from the confines of a mental prison within which the human race has been incarcerated for millennia. It is the privilege of each one of us to participate in this historic adventure, and we must be prepared for any eventuality. Kundalini yoga, if practised with dedication, patience and appropriate guidance, is the safest and most pleasant way of awakening that can ever take place in our lives.

With the awakening of kundalini, life becomes smooth. Plans and projects become clear, decisions become accurate, and the personality becomes dynamic and powerful. Therefore, do not be afraid of any risk. Once the awakening takes place, all your limitations will be overcome, because darkness can never exist in the face of kundalini.

Kundalini and Madness

Many individuals who experience the awakening of kundalini behave in a peculiar way; they think in a different style or pattern. They may see auras and visions, feel peculiar in the body, hear strange sounds and talk about things which seem to be all sorts of nonsense.

In society our brains are structured in a certain way; there is discipline and control which inhibit us from expressing ourselves freely. When the awakening of kundalini takes place, this conditioning is withdrawn and the lid is completely lifted from the mind. That is why the actions and words of those people who are undergoing kundalini awakening appear so nonsensical, deviant and oftentimes mad to the ordinary person. During kundalini awakening and madness, people may manifest the same symptoms, but on closer examination a difference can be detected between them. Similarly, if you film one person laughing out of madness and another person laughing with friends, they will look almost the same but actually they are different. Most of us have probably read stories about the avadhootas and fakirs of India, and the Sufi and Christian mystics. Externally, these God intoxicated ones looked crazy, but if you were with them they would have appeared and proved to be very clear. The inner consciousness of such people is absolutely lucid, organized and disciplined.

A great misunderstanding

Mystics throughout the ages have been persecuted for their experiences, which to the normal mundane consciousness are insanity, yet to the sage are ecstasy. Socrates was poisoned because he did not behave normally. Christ was crucified on the cross because his teachings were not understood. Al-Hallaj, the Sufi saint, was skinned alive because he spoke the truth without fear of society. Joan of Arc and the witches of Salem were burned at the stake, as were many others. All have been persecuted and harassed by the mundane populace for their vision, which arose as a result of inner work. Due to this lack of understanding, many of the esoteric doctrines were hidden from the majority of people.

Of course, this was long ago. We live in a more enlightened world today, far from the barbarous atrocities of the past, or do we? War and poverty still exist, as do insanity and madness. People who are shown to be crazy, relative to the norms of our society, are locked up until they are 'better'. Yet, by what criteria are they judged insane? How do we know the difference between insanity and the ecstasy of enlightenment? Is it by the superficial external appearances that we sense with our limited sensory apparatus, or is it by some deeper inner fear that we are motivated to judge others insane because they do not behave like the majority? Some of the people in the west who are locked up as insane would be recognized in the east as having undergone higher spiritual experiences. Therefore, it is now up to modern science to determine some definite, concrete and reliable ways to differentiate between the broken, insane mind and the opening, enlightened mind.

Spiritual experiences in the East and West

Knowledge of spiritual experience has been lost in the West. During the last few centuries, many unfortunate people whose kundalini had awakened were sent to mental hospitals and given drugs, electric shocks and other inappropriate treatments. The scientists and doctors believed that the awakening was an abnormal kind of behaviour, and no one was able to accept or handle it, not even the person's immediate family or closest friends. That is why in the last two hundred years, there have been so few great personalities in

the west; they have all been committed to mental hospitals or they have remained quiet to avoid that fate.
In India, the situation is quite different. There, when an individual expresses some abnormal symptoms, makes some very peculiar gestures or speaks of extraordinary dreams, it is understood that he is experiencing events beyond the mind. The Hindu belief is that the consciousness is not the finished product of nature, but is subject to evolution, and between one state of being and the next, there is a crisis. When strange symptoms occur in someone, it is believed that his consciousness is undergoing evolution. If a child's total personality is devoted to God and he can experience things beyond the mind, then his whole family is purified and such a child is universally respected.

A spiritual awakening or madness?

Though the process of spiritual awakening usually occurs without incident or interruption, it may happen that blockages and impurities in the body create symptoms which mimic various neurological and psychiatric conditions. These problems necessitate careful diagnosis to differentiate kundalini arousal and pathology.
It is very simple to distinguish between a mental or psychic phenomenon and a mental sickness, however many of the symptoms may overlap; mental illness never develops in people who are free from conflict. If a person is undergoing a problem in his personal life, perhaps due to a death, loss of property or emotional breakdown, psychotic behaviour can develop. Fantasies can take form and one's own psychological volition can manifest in the form of psychic energy. On the other hand, if there are no conflicts, anxieties or strong crosscurrents in a person's life, he cannot possibly have any mental disease. Suppose you have no apparent problems, no personal or social difficulties, but still you are having some strange supra sensual experiences. In a case like this, there should be no doubt about what is taking place.
A mad person does not have a constant and consistent flow of experience and his awareness is very dissipated. He is both disorganized externally and completely blinded internally. On the other hand, the awareness of a person who is awakened is constant and consistent. Whereas a person with an awakened consciousness can make accurate decisions and judgements, a crazy person cannot. Madness and spiritual awakening may both be characterized by a certain lack of control, but the spiritually awakened person is guided by a higher consciousness while the mad person is not.
When some supra sensual experience is taking place, it is important to consult an experienced person who has knowledge of illumination and also knows about madness. A guru can make the correct judgement and determine whether the brain has begun a process of regression or is actually progressing along transcendental lines. If there is some organic damage in the brain, it can be treated, but if the symptoms are spiritual, the person is initiated and given something to practise so his behaviour is streamlined. He or she will not be forced into married life or any other of the social roles which are unsuitable. Instead, he will be exposed to saintly personalities and teachings.
If this type of guidance and support for the experience is not obtained, it is very easy to end up in a mental hospital, or even a prison. However, scientists are now broadening their description of the spectrum of human behaviour and they are discovering that behaviour can be psychic or spiritual in origin as well as psychological or physical. Everybody should understand one very important point. Awakening of kundalini should never be equated with abnormal psychological behaviour, because awakening of kundalini is a process of jumping out of the mind.

Four Forms of Awakening

When we talk about awakening we should not confuse awakening of kundalini with other forms of awakening. Awakening of the chakras is completely different from awakening of kundalini. Awakening of sushumna is also quite a different event, and awakening of mooladhara chakra is not awakening of kundalini. Even if all the chakras from mooladhara up to ajna are awakened this does not mean that kundalini is awakened.
In the systematic process of awakening kundalini, the first step is to purify ida and pingala nadis and create harmony in their functioning. Next, all the chakras have to be awakened. Then sushumna nadi is awakened, and when there is a clear pathway for its ascent, kundalini can be awakened.
If the first three steps have been taken, awakening of kundalini will only have positive effects, but if they have been neglected and kundalini awakens, there will definitely be some negative results. Supposing you have awakened kundalini before sushumna awakening has taken place, then the shakti will not find a channel towards Shiva. It will remain obstructed in mooladhara chakra and will create tremendous sexual and neurotic problems. This is a negative result because you wanted to unite with Shiva and have higher experiences, whereas now you are experiencing the grosser things. If the chakras are not awakened before kundalini, the shakti will get blocked in one of the chakras

and remain stagnant, possibly for years. Some siddhis may develop and you may not be able to transcend them at all. This is also a negative effect.
Each form of awakening has its own psychic potential. Every nerve and fibre of your body is psychic; it is capable of producing psychic manifestations. There is a possibility of awakening the entire physical body. Every cell of the body is one individual. You are the macrocosmic body for that microcosmic individual.

Step 1: Disciplining ida and pingala

Ida and pingala nadis are responsible for the mundane existence. Pingala conducts the life that is in your body and ida conducts the consciousness. These two nadis respectively feed the two hemispheres of the brain, which in turn control every activity of the body. It is not awakening of these nadis we aim towards, but discipline. As you know, ida and pingala function alternately and directly influence the temperature of the body, digestive and hormonal secretions, the brain waves and all the bodily systems.
Ida and pingala function according to a natural cycle, but on account of poor eating habits and inharmonious lifestyles, the natural cycle is often disturbed. Sometimes one nadi predominates and the other is suppressed, which leads to mental and physical imbalances and generally results in disease. Therefore, ida and pingala must be disciplined or made to function according to the laws of nature. Only when there is harmony between these two nadis can sushumna be awakened.
So, through the practices of hatha yoga, pranayama and raja yoga, the nadis should be purified and disciplined. The best practice for this is nadi shodhana pranayama, the nadi purifying pranayama.

Step 2: Awakening the chakras

From incarnation to incarnation the yoga we have been practising may have already awakened the lower chakras.
Although most of us try to awaken mooladhara, swadhisthana etc. it may not be necessary to awaken them because we may have evolved even beyond manipura on account of our efforts in a previous life. It is even possible that kundalini may have ascended through the chakras, but we do not know it because we have not noticed any symptoms. However, in any case, it is essential that all the chakras must be awakened before we make an attempt to awaken sushumna.
If the chakras are not purified, then purification of the nadis will not serve any purpose. If the electrical junctions are not connected or properly organized, even if you have the best wiring available, how will the electrical energy be distributed? The chakras are the junctions from which the nadis, like cables, transmit the energy to different parts of the body.
Every point, speck or fibre of the body is directly related to one of the chakras. If you experience pain in any part of the body, the sensation will go to the chakras related to that particular area. This means your whole body is connected to the chakras. For example, the urinary, excretory and reproductive systems are fed by swadhisthana chakra. Besides this, the sexual organs are connected to mooladhara chakra. The digestive system, small intestine, large intestine, appendix, pancreas, duodenum, stomach and liver are all connected to manipura chakra. The heart and lungs are fed by anahata chakra.
However, in most people, the chakras beyond manipura are dormant. Because mooladhara chakra is the highest chakra in animal evolution, it is already functioning in most people. That is why everybody has a very acute sexual awareness and sex has become one of the most important events in man's life. Therefore, most of our social traditions are based upon this particular human requirement. The mere fact that today's society is utilizing the five tattwas of tantra (meat, fish, wine, grain and sexual interaction) in everyday life means that in most people, kundalini is somewhere between mooladhara and swadhisthana. Once kundalini leaves swadhisthana and ascends to manipura and anahata, you no longer need the five tattwas.
If you are stuck in mooladhara or swadhisthana chakra, you will need to purify the higher chakras and bring them into operation. There are many ways of doing it. For those who are strong in mind, there are some higher practices. By concentration on bhrumadhya you can awaken one chakra, by the practice of uddiyana bandha you can awaken another, by practising mantra, your mantra or any beeja mantra, you can awaken almost all the chakras one by one, and as a result of this awakening, you can have very good psychic experiences which you can easily handle. In my opinion, it is safer to awaken the chakras by the mild methods.
The asanas are intended to create mild awakening in the chakras. For example, sarvangasana will awaken vishuddhi, matsyasana will awaken anahata, and bhujangasana will awaken swadhisthana. By awakening the chakras mildly, you will not have any jolting experiences. Sometimes, when a chakra awakens suddenly, you can have the experience of lower lives. This means you can be assailed by fear, anxiety, greed, passion, depression, and so on.
Each chakra is symbolized by a certain animal, indicating a type of animal consciousness, and if sudden awakening of a chakra takes place, you may exhibit some of the animal emotions in either a mild or very strong way. For instance, fear is not a human emotion, nor is infatuation or violence. Of course, man is trying to expel the animal from himself, but at the same time he is maintaining it. Therefore, care must be taken not to

give an explosive manifestation to the awakening of the chakras.

Step 3: Awakening sushumna

In order to purify and awaken sushumna, a lot of work has to be done and you must be ready to cope with experiences that are more intense than those associated with chakra awakening. These experiences are beyond logic. They are not even real and they cannot be explained or properly understood. If the chakras are awakened, ida and pingala are balanced and the other nadis are also purified, but there is an obstruction in sushumna, then the awakening of kundalini will not fulfil its purpose.

Actually, I do not believe that ida and pingala nadis are inferior to sushumna. Awakening of pingala nadi will awaken one portion of the brain and awakening of ida will awaken another portion. However, when kundalini enters sushumna, it affects the whole brain.

In the ancient texts of tantra it has been clearly indicated that it does not matter if kundalini enters another passageway. If there is an awakening in pingala, one becomes a healer or a siddha, one who has control over nature, matter and the mind. When there is awakening in ida, one can predict things; one becomes a prophet. But when sushumna awakens, kundalini ascends straight to sahasrara and one becomes a jivanmukta, a liberated soul.

So, hatha yoga and pranayama are prescribed for the awakening of sushumna. There are also other ways, but kriya yoga is the best, particularly the practices of maha mudra and maha bheda mudra. For awakening of sushumna, ida and pingala have to be suppressed. Thus you can see the importance of practising kumbhaka, breath retention. When both nadis are suppressed in kumbhaka, immediately after you will find that both nadis are flowing simultaneously. It is at this time that kundalini should awaken.

The Descent of Kundalini

Everybody talks about the ascent of kundalini, but few ever discuss the descent. When the descent of kundalini occurs, it means the lower mental plane of the human being is no longer influenced by the ordinary mind, the supermind takes over instead. This higher form of consciousness rules the body, mind and senses and directs your life, thoughts and emotions. Kundalini is henceforth the ruler of your life. That is the concept of descent.

The whole process after union

When Shiva and Shakti unite in sahasrara, one experiences samadhi, illumination occurs in the brain and the silent areas begin to function. Shiva and Shakti remain merged together for some time, during which there is a total loss of consciousness pertaining to each other. At that time a bindu evolves. Bindu means a point, a drop, and that bindu is the substratum of the whole cosmos. Within that bindu is the seat of human intelligence and the seat of the total creation. Then the bindu splits into two and Shiva and Shakti manifest again in duality. When ascension took place it was only the ascent of Shakti, but when descent takes place, Shiva and Shakti both descend to the gross plane and there is again knowledge of duality.

Those who have studied quantum physics will have a better understanding of this as it is difficult for everyone to understand from the philosophical point of view. After total union there is a process of coming down the same pathway you ascended. The gross consciousness which became fine, again becomes gross. That is the concept of divine incarnation or avatara.

The non-dual experience of samadhi

When one attains the highest pinnacles of samadhi, purusha and prakriti, or Shiva and Shakti, are in total union and only adwaita, non-dual experience, exists. At this time, when there is no subject/object plus distinction, it is very difficult for one to differentiate. He may look like an idiot and not know it, or he may appear to be a great scholar and not be aware of that. He does not know whether he is talking to a man or a woman, he sees no difference between them. He may even be associating with spiritual or divine people without being aware of that, because at this point of time his consciousness is reduced to a level of innocence just like that of a baby.

So, in the state of samadhi you are a baby. A baby cannot tell the difference between a man and a woman because he has no physical or sexual distinction. He cannot distinguish a scholar from an idiot and he may not even see any difference between a snake and a rope. He can hold a snake just as he holds a rope. This only happens when union is taking place.

When Shiva and Shakti descend to the gross plane, that is, mooladhara chakra, they separate and live as two entities. There is duality in mooladhara chakra. There is duality in the mind and senses and in the world of name and form, but there is no duality in samadhi. There is no seer or experiencer in the state of samadhi. There is nobody to say what samadhi is like because it is a non-dual experience.

Why Shiva and Shakti both descend

It is very difficult to understand why Shiva and Shakti both descend to the gross plane after having attained the highest union. What is the use of destroying the world and then creating it again? What is the point of transcending the consciousness if you have to come back to it again? Why bother to awaken kundalini and unite with Shiva in sahasrara if you have to come down to mooladhara again? This is something very mysterious and we can well ask, "Why awaken kundalini at all?"

Why build a mansion if you know you will have to burn it down when it is completed? We actually create a lot of things that are ultimately going to be destroyed. So why do it at all? It seems so crazy! We do so much sadhana to transcend the chakras and ascend from earth to heaven. Then, when we reach paradise and become one with that great reality, we suddenly decide to come back down; and not all alone, we bring the great one with us. It would be easier to understand if Shakti came back alone and Shiva remained in heaven. Maybe when Shakti is about to leave, Shiva says, "Wait, I'm coming with you."

A new existence on the gross plane

When kundalini descends, you come down to the gross plane with a totally transformed consciousness. You live a normal life, associating with everybody and discharging your worldly obligations just like other people do. Maybe you even play the game of desires, passions, cravings and such things. Maybe you play the game of victory and defeat, attachment and infatuation, but you are just playing a game. You know it; you do everything as an actor. You are not involved in it life and soul.

It is at this time that the genius or the transformed consciousness manifests through you. You do not have to think or plan how to perform miracles. You have to remember that you have come down as a transformed quality of consciousness. You must remember that you are now connected with those areas of the brain which were previously silent. You must also remember that you are linked with those reservoirs of knowledge, power and wisdom which belong to the realm of the higher cosmos.

Until the descent is complete, such a person lives a very simple life, unnoticed and unattended. Once the descent is complete he begins to play the game and people recognize him as a divine incarnation. They see he is something special compared to everybody else and they call him a guru. Such a person is actually a junior god.

Dealing with the issues of reality

When Shiva and Shakti descend to the gross level of awareness there is again duality. That is why the self-realized person is able to understand pain and all the mundane affairs of life. He understands the whole drama of duality, multiplicity and diversity. Sometimes we ordinary mortals are at a fix to understand how this person with the highest attainment is able to cope with the hopeless dualities of life.

When I was about thirteen, I was also puzzled by this question. There was a great lady saint who was supposed to have attained the very highest state and I used to visit her with my elders. I used to hear her discussing all the mundane and ordinary things of life – "How are you? How is your child? Is he sick? Are you giving him medicine? Why do you fight with your wife?" I used to think, "If she is an enlightened lady, she shouldn't talk about duality. How can she understand duality if she is in unity?"

I never got an answer, but everyone has his moments of experience in life and I have not been an exception to that. I came to understand that Shiva and Shakti live on both planes and that this gross plane of duality is an expression and manifestation of the correlation of Shiva and Shakti. This is precisely the reason why the great saints and mahatmas talk about charity, compassion, love, and so on. However, there is a period when they do not understand these things and they do not care what happens to the world. They do not even know what is going on, who is happy and who is suffering. Finally, however, there is a great transformation. Shakti rules matter and Shiva rules consciousness, and when they descend to the gross plane Shakti continues to rule matter, and Shiva, being consciousness, gives an understanding to the whole world.

Therefore, if we ever see a self-realized person discussing the trivialities of life and dealing with the issues of reality, we should not be surprised.

The Experiences of Awakening

The awakening of kundalini is like a great explosion which transports a person into another plane of being. No matter which spiritual path you follow, you must eventually reach this domain. Ordinary consciousness and transcendental consciousness cannot be maintained at the same time; it is necessary to pass through an intermediate zone of change, where perceptions, feelings and experiences undergo a transformation. The adventure is always the same; it is a journey through the border region between the known and the unknown.

At this time it is very important to recognize that this explosion signals a profound alteration in consciousness.

The complete process of awakening is comprised of several stages, as the kundalini rises and passes through the various chakras. It takes quite some time to become fully stabilized, but if one has a good understanding, the transition process can be managed without any serious difficulties.

The preliminary awakening of kundalini is followed by the experience of light in bhrumadhya. Usually this develops in a very mild way over an extended period of time and, therefore, does not precipitate any sudden agitation or disturbance. After some time, the appetite for food and sleep gradually decreases and the mind becomes quieter.

There is another prior warning which heralds the awakening of kundalini. In yoga and tantra it is very clearly indicated that when ida and pingala flow simultaneously for a long period of time, and sushumna begins to flow, then it is time to prepare for a spiritual event. Therefore, one should be conversant with swara yoga, the science of the breath cycle, and keep a close watch over the breathing process. The breathing pattern in the nostrils normally changes every fourth day, according to the cycles of the moon, but when both nostrils have been functioning equally well for at least fifteen days, that is an advance warning of an impending spiritual breakthrough.

An onslaught of experiences

When the actual awakening occurs there is an explosion in the realm of experience and there are symptoms which are sometimes very difficult to understand. The most unique and common experience is the release of energy like an electric shock from the bottom of the spinal cord, as if it were connected to an electrical power point. This may be accompanied by a burning sensation in mooladhara chakra and energy passing up and down through sushumna. Sometimes you hear drums, flutes, bells, birds, celestial music, or you may even think you can hear peacocks singing. You may have a very momentary sensation of sitting outside in the middle of a monsoon shower, and there can also be the sensation of dark clouds in continual movement overhead and the sound of thunder.

At times your body feels so light and you may even visualize your spinal cord as fluorescent light. It is common to feel illumination from within, as if hundreds of little lights were burning inside your body. This is one side. The other side is that all the anger, passions and suppressions come out. Sometimes you are so filled with fear that you cannot sleep, sometimes for days together you have nothing in your mind but sex, at other times you think of nothing but food. However, all these symptoms pass within a few days or weeks.

Some people obtain psychic powers: clairvoyance, telepathy, clairaudience, psychotelekinesis, the ability to heal, etc., and this brings a lot of temptations. However, this is a phase and it will pass away.

Sometimes you do not feel like eating for days. You may not have any appetite for fifteen to twenty days, and even if people try to force you to eat, you cannot. There is sometimes a feeling of nervous depression, and you may just want to sit, or you may feel restricted and closed in. There is a detachment from the normal emotions of life; for days you may live a life of utter dispassion. Nothing is interesting in life and everything and everybody seems as dry as a desert. But at the same time, the mind becomes very dynamic and appears to be formless. Various sensations, poetic emotions and artistic perceptions also occur, such as visions of angels and divinities. All kinds of things can emerge from the depths of the mind. However, these are just a few of the symptoms you may experience, but all of them pass away quickly.

The storm always settles and then the yogi lives a very normal life. Externally his life seems the same as anybody else's, but his inner awareness is far greater and more vast.

Headaches and insomnia

Some aspirants experience terrible headaches when kundalini is awakening, however, this does not mean that all headaches are related to kundalini, and not everybody will have headaches. Generally, those who have had a married life do not have this experience. It is usually only those who have not had any kind of sexual interactions who experience headaches with the advent of kundalini awakening.

There is also another explanation about headaches. One-tenth of the brain is active and nine-tenths are not. In some cases, when the silent areas of the brain begin to wake up, the first symptom is headache. People have equated this experience with labour pain. Just as a woman experiences labour pain when she is about to give birth to a child, when the silent areas of the brain are about to become active and you are giving birth to spiritual consciousness, there is also pain. Therefore, one has to bear with this pain for some time, but it will inevitably settle down. Of course, you can reduce the pain by adjusting your diet and lifestyle, but under no circumstances should you use sedatives, aspirins or pain-relieving pills.

It is also likely that an aspirant will experience insomnia. However, yogis do not call it insomnia. They say, "Why should I sleep?" If you love a person very much and he stays with you and does not allow you to sleep, will you call that insomnia? So, not all those who do not sleep are yogis. There are yogis who do not sleep and are happy about it because yogis have an entirely different attitude. They say one-third of life is wasted in sleeping.

So, when kundalini awakens in a yogi and consciousness is constant and consistent, and there is no waking,

sleeping and dreaming, they are very happy about it. Therefore, insomnia does not usually bother a person who has awakened kundalini. However, if you are disturbed by your inability to sleep, you should never resort to sleeping pills or tranquillizers. It is also not necessary that you practise yoga to induce sleep. Just accept your sleeplessness and enjoy it. You can do japa or meditation or just do some spiritual reflection. If this is not possible, just lie down and let it happen as it will.

Experiencing the threefold awakenings

Each of the three forms of awakening – Nadis, chakras and sushumna is accompanied by its own set of experiences. Many aspirants have psychic experiences and think that these indicate the awakening of kundalini, but this is not so.

When the chakras are awakening, the experiences one has are not so frightening and critical. They are usually of a fantastic nature, very pleasant, hallucinatory and comfortable. Even if you have an experience of fear or terror, it does not shake your mind. When you have experiences of your ishta devata or guru, or you have some experience in meditation or during kirtan, and it feels very nice, that represents chakra awakening and not kundalini awakening. When you experience a chakra awakening it is rather beautiful and leaves a comfortable or blissful feeling. That is to encourage you to go further.

When awakening takes place in sushumna, you may feel or see a rod of light, or your spinal cord may seem to be fully illumined from within. Such experiences are described by saints of different religions in their poems, songs and stories, which are unfortunately understood by very few people today.

The awakening of sushumna can also bring some mind exploding experiences which are sometimes very confusing. You can smell pleasant and unpleasant odours, you will hear shrieks and screams as if ghosts are crying, and there is a feeling of heat, creeping sensations and pain in different parts of the body. You may get a high fever or manifest the symptoms of some common disease or some baffling illness which medical experts find difficult to analyze.

At the time of sushumna awakening, the quality and experience of the mind begin to change. One has the experience of depression, anorexia and loneliness. You begin to realize the inner essence. Matter appears to be nothing, and even your body feels as if it were only made up of air. Or you may feel that you are not part of this physical body, you are someone else. When you look at people, animals and the objects of nature – the flowers, trees, rivers and mountains, and so on, you feel a communication with them.

At this time, you also experience prophetic vision, but your visions or forewarnings may not be clear and you only foresee the bad things – imminent perils, accidents, disasters and catastrophes. Throughout the awakening one generally has an aversion to work and cannot really apply oneself to anything. It is actually best if an aspirant is near his guru at this time of awakening so he can explain what is happening. The sadhaka is not merely making a transition from one state of mind to another, he is actually jumping from one state to another. It is also very difficult for even an expert guru to handle these matters unless the disciple has totally accepted him as his guru.

Differentiating the experiences

You must remember that when you have certain visions and fantastic experiences, they do not necessarily represent the awakening of kundalini or even sushumna nadi. They may indicate chakra awakening or they may just be the expression of your archetypes or samskaras. Because of your sadhana, concentration or one-pointedness, you may be allowing an outlet for your deep-rooted samskaras to express themselves.

These experiences and those that accompany chakra awakening do not mean anything when you try to assess them. I will give you an example. Many years ago, I was meditating on the bank of the Ganga in Rishikesh and suddenly I had a very vivid experience. I saw the whole earth split into two. It was a very clear vision, and I remember it even today, but this vision had nothing to do with reality; I just had it. This was an experience of chakra awakening.

When the actual awakening of kundalini takes place, it is a great event. Every experience has a tangible proof, whether it is awakening of extrasensory perceptions or the awakening of a particular kind of genius. It may be in the form of a philosophy you are able to deliver to people, a transformation in the physical elements of the body that you are able to materialize, or a magnetic influence that you can cast over the masses of people as a politician, musician or saint.

The awakening of kundalini has tangible, positive and concrete proof. You cannot believe your kundalini is awakened if you have no proof, because when the awakening of kundalini takes place, you completely transcend the normal categories of mental awareness and the scope of your knowledge becomes greater.

A scientist who jumped beyond the mind

There was a scientist named Eddington, who observed the determined laws of electrons and tried to formulate a system, a law. He succeeded, the result being the law of determinacy. However, once when he was studying the electrons, his vision changed entirely. He found that the electrons were behaving in a very

anarchical manner. There was no logic, system or hypothesis behind their behaviour. That was his vision, and he called it the law of indeterminacy.
Once he was asked, "What is this law which you have discovered behind the mathematical and logical behaviour of electrons?" He replied, "It cannot be explained." Someone asked, "How can you say that a movement in matter cannot be explained?" Eddington answered, "It can be explained if you can jump over the mind."

The process of transition

There is a natural process of transition in which a person's consciousness evolves over the course of millions of years. It takes place in the same way that a baby develops into a child, a child into a young person, a young person into a middleaged person, a middle-aged person into an old person. Suppose a child of five suddenly transformed into an old person and found he was tall, grey haired and speaking like an old person. It would be very difficult for him to handle the situation and to connect both the areas of his life. This is what generally happens with those who awaken kundalini.
Their experiences are often imbalanced and extremely difficult to understand. Just imagine how it would be if you felt your whole body burning as if it were in flames, or you kept feeling that a snake was crawling through your body. Imagine what it would be like to look at somebody's face and instead of seeing the person you see a ghost. You would start to think you were crazy! These are just a few of the bizarre experiences you could be confronted with. However, with the awakening of kundalini, there is also an awakening of vairagya, detachment. And when vairagya develops the turbulence settles, the awakening becomes peaceful and the transition is smooth.

The Path of Kriya Yoga

Awakening of kundalini is very difficult. You can try the various yogic and religious practices that have evolved throughout the ages, but they require a lot of self-discipline and demanding austerities. There are so many do's and don'ts that the average person finds unpalatable. Therefore, the rishis of the tantric tradition evolved a series of practices that could be easily adopted by every type of aspirant regardless of lifestyle, habits, beliefs, and so on. Of course, there are many practices belonging to tantra, but of them all, kriya yoga is considered to be the most powerful and suitable for a modern day person who is enmeshed in this world.
For many years, knowledge of this system of yoga was revealed to very few. The practices were mentioned in the tantric texts, but they were never clearly defined. Through a tradition, the practices were handed down from guru to disciple. They were given to both householder and monastic disciples, who soon discovered that through these techniques, kundalini became a real experience in their lives.
The ultimate purpose of kriya yoga is to create awakening in the chakras, to purify the nadis and, finally, to awaken the kundalini shakti. The kriyas are intended to awaken the kundalini in stages, not abruptly. When kundalini awakens abruptly, the experiences you have are very difficult to handle and you cannot understand what is happening to you. The techniques of kriya yoga offer a smooth and relatively risk-free means of expanding your awareness and awakening the dormant areas of the brain. This system of kriya yoga also provides a means whereby you do not have to tackle the mind directly. Its practices are based on hatha yoga, which aims at controlling the prana. Mind and prana interact with each other and therefore, by controlling the prana, we can gain control of the mind.

Kriya yoga offers a unique approach

Kriya yoga means 'the yoga of practice, movement of action.' Unlike the various religious, mystical or yogic practices which demand mental control, the special instruction in the system of kriya yoga is: "Do not worry about the mind." If your mind is dissipated or if there are distractions in your mind and you are not able to concentrate even for one second, it does not matter. You have only to continue with your practices, for even without confronting, controlling or trying to balance the mind, you can still evolve.
This is an entirely new concept in spiritual life, and most people have probably never even considered it. When they take to a religion, commence spiritual practices or go to gurus, the first thing they are told is to control the mind. "You should think like this. Don't think like that. You should do this. Don't do that. This is good. This is bad. That is evil. Do not sin," and so on.
People think that the mind is the greatest barrier in spiritual life, but this is a very wrong and dangerous concept. The mind is a bridge between this and that, so how can it be a barrier? An idiot thinks it is a barrier and he tries to destroy that bridge. Then when he has destroyed it, he wonders how he will get to the other side. This is the ironical fate of most people, and unfortunately it is religions, ethics and morality that are responsible. People who are less aware of ethics and morality have no mental problems. They are very good,

happy-go-lucky people.
The seers and rishis of kriya yoga have said, "Control of the mind is not necessary. Just go on practising the kriyas and let the mind do what it wants. In the course of time, the evolution of consciousness will take you to that point where the mind will no longer trouble you."
Dissipation of mind is not necessarily the fault of the mind. Distractions can be due to hormonal imbalances, bad digestion, low influx of energy in the nervous system and many other things. Never blame the mind for its restlessness, and do not consider yourself to be an impure, bad or inferior person because your mind jumps all over the place, thinking negative things and what you consider to be evil thoughts.
Everybody has negative thoughts and distractions of mind, even a compassionate and charitable person, a peaceful person, a chaste and pure person. Dozens of factors could be the cause of a distracted mind.
Suppressing the mind and calling it back again and again is not the way to concentrate the mind, it is a way to the mental hospital. After all, who suppresses or calls back who? Are there two personalities or two minds in you? Is there one bad mind which keeps wandering off and one good mind which tries to bring back the bad mind? No, there is only one mind and you should not create a split by antagonizing the mind. If you do this, one part of the mind becomes the dictator and controller and the other part becomes the victim. Then you will become totally schizophrenic.
It is necessary to understand this point very well, because our religions, philosophies and ways of thinking have not been very systematic, loving and tender in their approach to the mind. We have always been led to believe that the mind is very mischievous, but this is a grave mistake. Therefore, please try to redefine the mind and approach it scientifically.
The mind is not a psychological construct, nor is it a thought process. The mind is energy. Anger, passion, greed, ambition, and so on are waves of that energy. Through kriya yoga you are trying to harness the energies of the mind, but you should not try to suppress this energy because it will explode. And the more you suppress this energy the greater will be the ultimate explosion.
Kriya yoga is very clear in its approach to the mind. It emphasizes that you do not try to do anything with the mind. If your body protests about maintaining a fixed posture, change it. If your mind objects about closing the eyes, keep them open. However, you must continue with the kriya yoga practices because they have a direct effect on the deeper processes of the body which are responsible for the state of your mind. Remember that the body affects the mind and the mind affects the body.
We should not consider the techniques of kriya yoga as practices of concentration or meditation as their aim is not mental control. The beauty of kriya yoga is that you have only to remain relaxed and let the mind move naturally and spontaneously. Inner awareness will then awaken, and in time, your mind will automatically become one-pointed.

A path for all

As you know, we are all aspirants of a different calibre. Some of us are tamasic, some are rajasic and a very small number are sattwic. Of course, we are not purely sattwic, rajasic or tamasic. We are predominantly one of these, but we retain traces of the other two gunas. The tamasic mind has traces of rajo guna, and as it evolves, it retains traces of tamas, but it is now predominantly rajasic. It also develops traces of sattwa. As it evolves further, it becomes more rajasic and may or may not have traces of tamas and sattwa. Next, it becomes predominantly sattwic, with traces of rajo and tamo gunas here and there. Then in its fifth stage of evolution, the mind becomes totally sattwic, manifesting rajo and tamo gunas very rarely.
These five stages are like rungs on a ladder, representing the evolution of chitta or the mind. The lowest rung is known as the inert mind. The second rung is the scattered mind, the third is the oscillating mind, the fourth is the one-pointed mind and the fifth is the controlled mind.
Now, if you belong to one of the first three categories, and most of us do, after practising hatha yoga, you should take to kriya yoga. If you belong to one of the last two categories, then after hatha yoga, you can take to kriya yoga if you wish, or you can follow the path of raja yoga or any other path which asks you to concentrate through willpower. When you are at the sattwic level you can deal with the mind through the mind. At the tamasic or rajasic level, if you try to deal with the mind through the mind, you will cause a mental crisis.
In this world, there are very few sattwic people. Most of us have very restless and distracted minds, and we find it impossible to focus on one object or theme for very long. You know what happens if you light a candle when the wind is blowing? The same thing happens when most people try to concentrate. The fluctuations of the mind totally annihilate the one-pointedness. So, the kriya yoga practices were designed for those people who are unable to control, concentrate or stabilize their mind and for those who cannot sit in one posture for a prolonged period of time.
Whether you are sattwic, rajasic or tamasic, the practices of hatha yoga should be taken up first. A tamasic person needs hatha yoga to awaken his mind, body and personality. A person who is rajasic needs hatha yoga to balance the solar and lunar energies in his body and mind. A person who is sattwic by temperament needs

hatha yoga to help awaken kundalini. Hatha yoga is for everybody. If you have been practising asanas, pranayama, mudras and bandhas consistently for two years or more, then you are ready for kriya yoga. Hatha yoga is the basis of kriya yoga.

The practices

There are many kriya yoga practices, but a combination of twenty is considered very important and powerful. These twenty practices are divided into two groups. One group, comprised of the first nine practices, is to be done with the eyes open, and the other group, comprised of eleven practices, is to be done with the eyes closed. For the first group of practices, the central instruction is, "Do not close your eyes." Even though you feel very relaxed and have a tendency to go within, you must not close your eyes. You can blink, you can rest, you can stop the practices for a minute, but each practice must be done with the eyes open. This is a very important instruction for kriya yoga practise.

The first practice in kriya yoga is called vipareeta karani mudra. Vipareeta means reverse and karani means action, therefore, vipareeta karani mudra is a method for creating a reverse action. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and in the tantric texts, there is a wonderful statement regarding this reverse action: "From the moon the nectar emanates. When the sun consumes the nectar, the yogi becomes old. His body decays and he dies. Therefore, by constant practice, the yogi should try to reverse the process. The nectar which is flowing from the moon (bindu) towards the sun (manipura chakra) should be reversed and sent back to the higher centres." What will happen then? *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* continues: "When you are able to reverse the flow of amrit or nectar, it will not be consumed by the sun. It will be assimilated by your pure body."

When your body has been purified by hatha yoga, pranayama and a pure diet, this nectar is assimilated by the body and, as a result, you experience a high mental state. When the nectar returns to its source in the higher centres of the brain, and is not consumed by the sun, you begin to feel a sort of calmness and quietness. Even if your mind was distracted, confused, wandering and vacillating a few moments before, suddenly all these activities come to an end and you feel total brightness. Your eyes are open, you can hear sounds and see everything around you, but the mind does not move. It appears as if time, space and object have ceased and the whole universe has stopped functioning.

The main hypothesis or contention here is that you can influence the structures of the body; you can create a change in the energy forces. By creating a change in the physical secretions, by altering the chemical and energy proportions in the body, you can create an effect on the mind which you may call shanti, dharana, dhyana or samadhi. This means that even when your mind is totally undisciplined and you cannot handle it for a second, if you are able to create the correct proportion of secretions in the different areas of the body/mind, then the higher state can be achieved.

You know what happens if you take a dose of ganja (marijuana)? Take a few puffs and see what happens to your mind. It slows down and the brain waves change from theta to beta, from alpha to delta. Suddenly you feel calm and quiet. What happened to your mind? You did not fight with it. I am not advocating the use of ganja, I am just giving you a very gross example of how kriya yoga works on your mind. By infusing ganja or some hallucinogenic drug, the chemical properties of the gross body change. The heart slows down, the breathing rate changes, the brain waves alter and the mind becomes calm and still. Is it not possible to arrive at the same point through kriya yoga? Yes, this is exactly what is accomplished through kriya yoga.

The various practices of kriya yoga, particularly vipareeta karani mudra, amrit pan, khechari mudra, moola bandha, maha mudra, maha bheda mudra, etc. regulate the nervous system. They harmonize the pranic forces in the body and equalize the quantity and effects of the positive and negative ions. More than that, they help you to attain a state of peace and tranquillity without beating, kicking and abusing the mind. All this is a result of having induced the flow of certain unused and natural chemicals of the body. Amrit is one of those chemicals and through a practice known as khechari mudra, it can be made to flow.

Khechari mudra

Khechari mudra is a simple but very important technique which is utilized in most of the kriya yoga practices. It involves folding the tongue back and placing it against the upper palate. In the course of time the tongue becomes elongated and can be inserted into the nasal orifice. Then certain glands which are connected with the cranial passage and bindu are stimulated and, as a result, amrit or nectar begins to flow. When amrit is released you experience a special type of 'high' or intoxication.

It might take you a few years to perfect khechari mudra and to stimulate the flow of amrit, but it is well worth the effort. When you sit for meditation the mind is perfectly still, it cannot move and you cannot think. There is shoonyata, an experience of total nothingness. If you are practising mantra, you feel that somebody else is practising and you are only witnessing it. This is considered a very important experience because it puts you in touch with the external and internal experiences at the same time and you are completely aware of yourself. You attain a state where you are simultaneously aware of the world of mind, senses and objects, and the world of inner peace, tranquillity and relaxation. When there is perfect harmony in the nervous system, coronary

behaviour is in inertia, body temperature is low and alpha waves are predominant in the brain, how can the mind move? This is the philosophy of kriya yoga.

Readiness for kriya yoga

If through the yoga practices you have been doing, you have reached a point where you find that although concentration has been achieved, inner peace has been experienced and you can maintain total quietness of body, mind and spirit for a prolonged period, but still you feel there is something more to achieve, you are definitely ready for kriya yoga.

Peace of mind, relaxation and proper understanding, which are the fruits of spiritual life, are not an end in themselves. The ultimate purpose of yoga is to change the quality of experience and to change the quality of the mind and its perception. What man has aimed at achieving through yoga is expansion of mind and liberation of energy and, in essence, that is tantra, and that is the ultimate goal of kriya yoga.

Vama Marga and Kundalini Awakening

Sexual life has always been a problem for mankind. From the beginning of history, the primal energy has been misunderstood. Religious teachers and moralists have denounced it, but still sexual life has continued, not because man respects it, but because he needs it. He may want to give it up, but he cannot remove it from his mind, for this is one of his most powerful urges.

In the context of yoga and tantra the common definition of sexual life has no relevance. It is absolutely unscientific and incorrect. This definition has created a society of hypocrites. It has led thousands of young people into mental asylums. When you want something which you think is bad, all kinds of guilt complexes arise. This is the beginning of schizophrenia, and all of us are schizophrenic to some extent.

Therefore, the yogis have tried to give a correct direction to the sexual urge. Yoga does not interfere with sexual life. Normal sexual life is neither spiritual nor aspiritual, but if you practise yoga and master certain techniques, then sexual life becomes spiritual. Of course, if you lead a celibate life, that is spiritual too.

Left hand tantra

The science of tantra has two main branches, which are known as vama marga and dakshina marga. Vama marga is the left path which combines sexual life with yoga practices in order to explode the dormant energy centres. Dakshina marga is the right path of yoga practices without sexual enactment. Previously, due to the barriers in sexual life, the path most widely followed was dakshina marga. Today, however, these barriers are rapidly being broken, and the path most sought after by people everywhere is vama marga, which utilizes sexual life for spiritual development.

According to tantra, sexual life has a threefold purpose. Some practise it for procreation, others for pleasure, but the tantric yogi practises it for samadhi. He does not hold any negative views about it, he does it as a part of his sadhana, but, at the same time, he realizes that for spiritual purposes, the experience must be maintained. Ordinarily this experience is lost before one is able to deepen it. By mastering certain techniques, however, this experience can become continuous even throughout daily life. Then the silent centres of the brain are awakened and start to function all the time.

The energy principle

The contention of vama marga is that the awakening of kundalini is possible through the sexual interaction between man and woman. The concept behind this follows the same lines as the process of fission and fusion described in modern physics. Man and woman represent positive and negative energy. On a mental level they represent time and space. Ordinarily, these two forces stand at opposite poles. During sexual interaction, however, they move out of their position of polarity, towards the centre. When they come together at the nucleus or central point, an explosion occurs and matter becomes manifest. This is the basic theme of tantric initiation.

The natural event that takes place between a man and woman is considered as the explosion of the energy centre. In every speck of life, the union between the positive and negative poles is responsible for creation. At the same time, union between the positive and negative poles is also responsible for enlightenment. The experience which takes place at the time of union is a glimpse of the higher experience.

This subject has been thoroughly discussed in all the old scriptures of tantra. Actually, more important than the energy waves that are created during the mutual union, is the process of directing that energy to the higher centres. Everybody knows how this energy is to be created, but nobody knows how to direct it to the higher centres. In fact, very few people have a full and positive understanding of this natural event which almost everybody in the world experiences. If the conjugal experience, which is generally very transitory, could be extended for a period of time, then the experience of enlightenment would take place.

The elements that are brought together in this process of union are known as Shiva and Shakti. Shiva represents purusha or consciousness and Shakti represents prakriti or energy. Shakti, in different forms, is present in all creation. Both material and spiritual energy are known as Shakti. When the energy moves outwardly it is material energy and when it is directed upwards it is spiritual energy. Therefore, when the union between man and woman is practised in the correct way, it has a very positive influence on the development of spiritual awareness.

Retaining the bindu

Bindu means a point or a drop. In tantra, bindu is considered to be the nucleus, or the abode of matter, the point from which all creation becomes manifest. The source of bindu is actually in the higher centres of the brain, but due to the development of emotions and passions, bindu falls down to the lower region where it is transformed into sperm and ova. At the higher level bindu is a point. At the lower level it is a drop of liquid, which drips from the male and female orgasm.

According to tantra, the preservation of the bindu is absolutely necessary for two reasons. Firstly, the process of regeneration can only be carried out with the help of bindu. Secondly, all the spiritual experiences take place when there is an explosion of bindu. This explosion can result in the creation of a thought or of anything. Therefore, in tantra, certain practices are recommended by which the male partner can stop ejaculation and retain the bindu.

According to tantra, ejaculation should not take place. One should learn how to stop it. For this purpose, the male partner should perfect the practices of vajroli mudra as well as moola bandha and uddiyana bandha. When these three kriyas are perfected, one is able to stop ejaculation completely at any point of the experience. The sexual act culminates in a particular experience which is reached only at the point of explosion of energy. Unless the energy explodes, the experience cannot take place. However, this experience has to be maintained so that the energy level remains high. When the energy level falls, ejaculation takes place. Therefore, ejaculation is avoided, not so much to preserve the semen, but because it causes a depression in the level of energy.

To make this energy travel upwards through the spine, certain hatha yoga kriyas have to be mastered. The experience which is concomitant of energy has to be raised to the higher centres. It is only possible to do this if you are able to prolong and maintain that experience. As long as the experience continues, you can direct it to the higher centres, but as soon as the energy level undergoes depression, ejaculation will inevitably take place. Ejaculation brings down the temperature of the body and, at the same time, the nervous system undergoes depression. When the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems undergo depression, the brain is affected, which is why many people have mental problems. When you are able to retain the semen without ejaculating at all, the energy in the nervous system and the temperature in the whole body are maintained. At the same time, you are free from the sense of loss, depression, frustration and guilt. Retention of the semen will also help to increase the sexual frequency, and that is better for both partners. The sexual act does not have to create weakness or dissipate the energy, on the contrary, it can become a means of exploding the energy. Therefore, the value of retaining the bindu should not be underestimated.

In hatha yoga there are certain practices which must be perfected for this purpose. You should begin with asanas such as paschimottanasana, shalabhasana, vajrasana, supta vajrasana and siddhasana. These are beneficial as they place an automatic contraction on the lower centres. Sirshasana is also important because it ventilates the brain so that all of one's experiences will be healthy. When these postures have been mastered, shambhavi mudra is perfected in order to hold the concentration steadily at bhrumadhya. Then vajroli mudra has to be practised together with moola bandha and uddiyana bandha with kumbhaka. Practise of kumbhaka is necessary while the ejaculation is being held. Retention of the breath and the bindu go hand in hand. Loss of kumbhaka is loss of bindu, and loss of bindu is loss of kumbhaka.

During kumbhaka, when you are maintaining the experience, you should be able to direct it to the higher centres. If you are able to create an archetype of this experience, perhaps in the form of a serpent or a luminous continuity, then the result will be fantastic. So, in spiritual life bindu must be preserved at all costs.

The female experience

In the female body, the point of concentration is at mooladhara chakra, which is situated at the cervix, just behind the opening of the uterus. This is the point where space and time unite and explode in the form of an experience. In ordinary language that experience is known as orgasm, but in the language of tantra it is called an awakening. In order to maintain the continuity of that experience, it is necessary for a build up of energy to take place at that particular bindu or point. Usually this does not happen because the explosion of energy dissipates throughout the body through the sexual orgasm. In order to avoid this happening, the woman must be able to hold her mind in absolute concentration on that particular point. The practice for this is known as sahajoli.

Sahajoli is actually concentration on the bindu, but this is very difficult. Therefore, the practice of sahajoli,

which is the contraction of the vaginal as well as the uterine muscles, should be practised over a long period of time.
If girls are taught uddiyana bandha at an early age, they will perfect sahajoli quite naturally with time. Uddiyana bandha is always practised with external retention. It is important to be able to perform this in any position. Usually it is practised in siddha yoni asana, but one should be able to do it in vajrasana or the crow posture as well. When you practise uddiyana bandha, the other two bandhas – jalandhara and moola bandha, occur spontaneously.
Years of practice will create a keen sense of concentration on the correct point in the body. This concentration is more mental in nature; however, since it is not possible to do it mentally one has to start from some physical point. If a woman is able to concentrate and maintain the continuity of the experience, she can awaken her energy to a high level.
According to tantra, there are two different areas of orgasm. One is in the nervous zone, which is the common experience for most women, and the other is in mooladhara chakra. When sahajoli is practised during maithuna (the act of sexual union), mooladhara chakra wakes up and the spiritual or tantric orgasm takes place.
When the female yogi is able to practise sahajoli for say five to fifteen minutes, she can retain the tantric orgasm for the same period of time. By retaining this experience, the flow of energy is reversed. Circulation of blood and sympathetic/parasympathetic forces move upward. At this point, she transcends normal consciousness and sees the light. That is how she enters the deep state of dhyana. Unless the woman is able to practise sahajoli, she will not be able to retain the impulses necessary for the tantric orgasm, and consequently she will have the nervous orgasm, which is short-lived and followed by dissatisfaction and exhaustion. This is often the cause of a woman's hysteria and depression. So sahajoli is an extremely important practice for women. In uddiyana, nauli, naukasana, vajrasana and siddha yoni asana, sahajoli comes naturally.
The practice of amaroli is very important for married women. The word amaroli means 'immortal' and through this practice one is freed of many diseases. Practising amaroli over a prolonged period also produces a hormone known as prostaglandin, which destroys the ova and prevents conception from taking place.

Tantric guru

Just as in the scheme of creation, Shakti is the creator and Shiva the witness of the whole game, in tantra the woman has the status of guru and the man of disciple. The tantric tradition is actually passed on from the woman to the man. In the tantric practice, it is the woman who initiates. It is only by her power that the act of maithuna takes place. All the preliminaries are done by her. She puts the mark on the man's forehead and tells him where to meditate. In ordinary interaction the man takes the aggressive role and the woman participates, but in tantra they switch roles. The woman becomes the operator and the man her medium. She has to be able to arouse him. Then, at the right moment, she must create the bindu so he can practise vajroli. If the man loses his bindu, it means that the woman has failed to carry out her functions properly.
In tantra it is said that Shiva is incapable without Shakti. Shakti is the priestess. Therefore, when vama marga is practised, the man must have an absolutely tantric attitude towards the woman. He cannot behave with her as men generally do with other women. Ordinarily, when a man looks at a woman he becomes passionate, but during maithuna he should not. He should see her as the divine mother, Devi, and approach her with an attitude of devotion and surrender, not with lust.
According to the tantric concept, women are more endowed with spiritual qualities and it would be wise if they were allowed to assume higher positions in social affairs.
Then there would be greater beauty, compassion, love and understanding in all spheres of life. What we are discussing here is not patriarchal society versus matriarchal society, but tantra, particularly left hand tantra.

Path of yogis not bhogis

In tantra, the practice of maithuna is said to be the easiest way to awaken sushumna because it involves an act which most people are already accustomed to. However, frankly speaking, very few are prepared for this path. Ordinary sexual interaction is not maithuna. The physical act may be the same, but the background is totally different.
In the relationship between husband and wife, for example, there is dependency and ownership, but in tantra each partner is independent. Another difficult thing in tantric sadhana is cultivating the attitude of passionlessness. One has to virtually become brahmacharya so as to free the mind and emotions of the sexual thoughts and passions which normally arise.
Both partners must be absolutely purified and controlled internally and externally before they practise maithuna. This is hard for the ordinary person to comprehend because for most people, sexual interaction is the result of passion and physical or emotional attraction, either for progeny or pleasure. It is only when you are purified that these instinctive urges are absent. According to tradition, this is why the path of dakshina marga must be followed for many years before the path of vama marga can be entered. Then the

interaction of maithuna does not take place for physical gratification. The purpose is very clear – awakening of sushumna, raising the kundalini energy from mooladhara chakra, and exploding the unconscious areas of the brain.

If this is not clear when you practise the kriyas, and sushumna becomes active, you will not be able to face the awakening. You will not be able to control the passion and excitement because you have not tranquillized your brain. Therefore, in my opinion, only those who are adepts in yoga qualify for vama marga. This path is not to be used indiscriminately as a pretext for self-indulgence. It is meant for mature and serious-minded householder sadhakas, who are evolved, who have been practising sadhana to awaken the energy potential and to attain samadhi. They must utilize this path as a vehicle of awakening otherwise it becomes a path of downfall.

The Chakras

Introduction to the Chakras

The subject of chakras is not going to be an easy one. Many scientists and philosophers are confronted with a great difficulty when it comes to accepting and explaining the existence of the chakras. They do not know whether the chakras are to be found in the physical body or in the subtle body. If they exist in the physical body, where are they? And, of course, the subtle body is not the subject of modern anatomical science.

In the past, doctors and scientists used to ask me, "Why, when we have witnessed many operations, have we never seen the chakras?" At the time, the only reply I could give them was, "Can you show me the sound waves in a transistor radio? I have opened up radios but I have never found the BBC there." This reply answered their questions, but it did not really satisfy them. Scientists want a scientific explanation and, for this, new areas of research are being developed.

An eminent Japanese scientist, Dr Hiroshi Motoyama, has invented sensitive machines for measuring the vital energy of the body. One apparatus measures the functioning of the nadis and their corresponding body organs, and this machine is now being used in some Japanese hospitals to diagnose disease tendencies before they actually manifest. Another invention is 'the chakra machine', which records the impulses that emanate from the psychic centres in the spinal cord. On this machine it is possible to register definite impulses from these areas in individuals who have been practising yoga for many years, and who have awakened their psychic faculties. For example, when a subject practises pranayama with kumbhaka and maha bandha – contraction of the perineum, abdomen and thyroid, the machine registers changes in the impulses emanating from the psychic centres. This research shows that energy is definitely activated by the yoga practices. However we still have a lot of research to do in order to provide more scientific explanations.

There are many different interpretations of the science of chakras. Of course, the differences are not that great, but they are there. The thinkers of Theosophical movements and their predecessors have their own interpretations of the chakras, their location points, their colours, and so on. The Rosicrucians and others may say something completely different and the tantric texts may also present entirely different concepts.

Chakra perception

The chakras, kundalini and the mind have subtle aspects on all levels of vibration. This is extremely complicated and most of the realization at these levels must be very personal. Even then, different people see these occult aspects from different points of view. For instance, if they have realizations about the chakras, these will be coloured by their own personal tendencies. Some concentrate on their more subtle mystical aspects, some on their energy and pranic manifestations, some on their functional reality, some on their psychological effects, and still others on their physical concomitants. These are usually all correct and when various authorities get together, they find that they are talking about the same things but from different points of view. If we look at a person through binoculars, he looks large. If we look at him with ordinary vision, he looks the usual size. If we view him through an X-ray screen, we see his skeleton, and if we look through a gastroscope, we see the inside of his stomach. Same person – different viewpoints.

In the same way, whereas a mystic or yogi will describe the chakras in a spiritual or symbolic way, the surgeon may describe the chakras as bunches of nerve fibres making up what he calls the plexuses, and a clairvoyant will describe the energy manifestations of the chakras in yet a different way. These people may have disagreements, but actually they are seeing the same thing from different viewpoints. Discrepancies are largely semantic due to differing cultural, educational and personal understandings. This is a common problem amongst people when they try to communicate any idea or experience in words.

Whereas I have great respect for the tantric concept, I have my own experience and, therefore, in my description of the chakras I will make references to both. However, rather than trying to understand the chakras through the written or verbal description of others, you must experience them for yourself and gain your own personal knowledge. Tantra is essentially a practical science rather than an intellectual one and only practise leads to true experience and real understanding.

Chakra symbology

If you are practising kundalini or kriya yoga, you will need to know the different colours and symbols of the chakras. They are very beautiful and form an intrinsic part of the awakening of the individual chakras. Each chakra has a particular colour, mantra, situation and range of experiences.

Whereas the various esoteric cults and spiritual systems use different symbols to represent the chakras, in tantra and yoga the chakras are symbolized by lotus flowers. As a symbol, the lotus is very significant. Man must pass through three clear stages in spiritual life, which represent his existence on three different

levels: ignorance, aspiration and endeavour, and illumination. The lotus also exists on three different levels – mud, water and air. It sprouts in the mud (ignorance), grows up through the water in an effort to reach the surface (endeavour and aspiration) and eventually reaches the air and the direct light of the sun (illumination). Thus the lotus symbolizes man's growth from the lowest states of awareness to the higher states of consciousness. The culmination of the growth of the lotus is a beautiful flower. In the same way, the culmination of man's spiritual quest is the awakening and blossoming of human potential.
So each of the principal chakras can be visualized as a lotus flower with a specific colour and number of petals:

1. ***Mooladhara*** – four-petalled deep red lotus.
2. ***Swadhisthana*** – six-petalled vermilion lotus.
3. ***Manipura*** – ten-petalled bright yellow lotus.
4. ***Anahata*** – twelve-petalled blue lotus.
5. ***Vishuddhi*** – sixteen-petalled violet lotus.
6. ***Ajna*** – two-petalled silver-grey lotus.
7. ***Sahasrara*** – one thousand-petalled multicoloured or red lotus.

In each chakra six aspects are combined:

1. The chakra colour.
2. The petals of the lotus flower.
3. The yantra or geometrical shape.
4. The beeja mantra.
5. The animal symbol.
6. The higher or divine beings.

The animals represent your previous evolution and instincts, and the divine beings represent higher consciousness.
In my exposition of the chakras I may say a chakra is a particular colour, but if you are a good yogic aspirant and in your concentration on that chakra you realize another colour, that is the truth for you. Your experiences are just as valid as mine, but one thing is definite: as you move up through the chakras, the frequencies of the colours become more subtle and more powerful.

Chakra kshetram

In many of the practices of kundalini yoga we must concentrate or focus our awareness on the chakra trigger points in the spinal cord. However, many people find it easier to concentrate on the chakra kshetram located on the front surface of the body. In kriya yoga particularly, the chakra kshetrams are utilized in many of the practices. The kshetrams can be regarded as reflections of the original chakra trigger points, and when we concentrate on them it creates a sensation which passes through the nerves to the chakra itself and then travels up to the brain.
Mooladhara does not have a kshetram, but swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi and ajna have physical counterparts directly in front of them on the same horizontal plane. Swadhisthana kshetram is at the level of the pubic bone in the front of the body, just above the genital organ. Manipura kshetram is at the navel, anahata kshetram is at the heart, and vishuddhi kshetram is located on the front surface of the throat pit, in the vicinity of the thyroid gland. Ajna kshetram is bhrumadhya, the mid-eyebrow centre.

The granthis

There are three *granthis* (psychic knots) in the physical body which are obstacles on the path of the awakened kundalini. The granthis are called *brahma*, *vishnu* and *rudra*, and they represent levels of awareness where the power of *maya*, ignorance and attachment to material things is especially strong. Each aspirant must transcend these barriers to make a clear passageway for the ascending kundalini.
Brahma granthi functions in the region of mooladhara chakra. It implies attachment to physical pleasures, material objects and excessive selfishness. It also implies the ensnaring power of tamas – negativity, lethargy and ignorance.
Vishnu granthi operates in the region of anahata chakra. It is associated with the bondage of emotional attachment and attachment to people and inner psychic visions. It is connected with rajas – the tendency towards passion, ambition and assertiveness.
Rudra granthi functions in the region of ajna chakra. It is associated with attachment to siddhis, psychic phenomena and the concept of ourselves as individuals. One must surrender the sense of individual ego and transcend duality to make further spiritual progress.

Conversion centres

Besides functioning as control centres, the chakras work as centres of interchange between the physical, astral and causal dimensions. For instance, through the chakras, subtle energy from the astral and causal dimension can be transformed into energy for the physical dimension. This can be seen in yogis who have been buried

underground for long periods of time. Through activation of vishuddhi chakra, which controls hunger and thirst and enables one to subsist on subtle energy in the form of amrit or nectar, they have been able to maintain their existence.

It is further contemplated that physical energy can be transformed into subtle energy through the action of the chakras and that physical energy can be converted into mental energy within the physical dimension.

Thus the chakras are seen to be intermediaries for energy transfer and conversion between two neighbouring dimensions of being as well as facilitating the energy conversion between the body and mind. As the chakras are activated and awakened, man not only becomes aware of the higher realms of existence, but also gains the power to enter those realms and then, in turn, to support and give life to the lower dimensions.

Evolution through the Chakras

All life is evolving and man is no exception. Human evolution, the evolution which we are undergoing relentlessly, both as individuals and as a race, is a journey through the different chakras. Mooladhara is the most basic, fundamental chakra from where we commence our evolution, and sahasrara is where our evolution is completed. As we evolve towards sahasrara, outer experiences come our way in life, and inner experiences come to us in meditation, as different capacities and centres awaken progressively within the nervous system. This occurs as energy flows at higher voltages and rates of vibration through the different nadis in the psychic body.

Mooladhara is the first centre in human incarnation, but it is the highest chakra that animals have the capacity to awaken. It is their sahasrara. The higher chakras beyond mooladhara are not present in the psychic physiology of animals and their nervous systems reflect this relative deficiency.

Below mooladhara there are other chakras, known as patalas, which represent the evolution of the animal kingdom. These chakras are only related to sense consciousness and not to mental awareness. When your consciousness was evolving through these chakras your mind was only associated with sense consciousness. There was no individual awareness and no ego; it began from mooladhara. These lower centres are no longer functioning in human beings because we have transcended them.

In the animal body, these inferior chakras are situated in the legs, and so are the nadis. The nadis flow to their confluence point at mooladhara chakra, just as the nadis in the human body flow to ajna chakra. The names of the lower chakras are *atala, vitala, sutala, talatala, rasatala, mahatala* and the lowest is *patala*. Just as mooladhara is the lowest chakra in the human body, patala is the lowest in the animal kingdom. It is the dimension which represents total darkness, where nature is not functioning and matter is completely dormant and static.

Above sahasrara there are also other chakras, or we can call them *lokas*, which represent the higher divine consciousness. So mooladhara chakra is the highest in animal evolution and the first in human evolution. Sahasrara is the highest point in human evolution and the first step in the highest divine evolution.

As you read more about the chakras, you will come to realize that kundalini actually controls every affair of life. When this shakti was passing through the animal stages of our evolution, it was influencing the whole species with *avidya* or ignorance. On account of its influence, the animal kingdom was compelled to follow the instinctual path of eating, sleeping, fearing and mating. This represented the tamasic phase of evolution. From mooladhara onward we pass through the rajasic phase and from sahasrara onward we enter the sattwic phase of evolution.

Spontaneous and self-propelled evolution

Up to mooladhara chakra evolution takes place automatically. Animals do not have to practise pranayama and japa yoga. They do not have to find a guru, take sannyasa and become disciples. They do not have to do anything and they can eat whatever they want. Nature controls them completely. Because they do not think, nature is benevolently responsible for every phase of their evolution.

However, once kundalini reaches mooladhara chakra, evolution is no longer spontaneous because a human being is not completely subject to the laws of nature. For example, animals will only mate in particular seasons. At other times, even if they live together, they will not mate. But, because man is free from the laws of nature, he can mate whenever he chooses.

Man has awareness of time and space, and he has an ego. He can think, he can know that he is thinking and he can know that he knows that he is thinking. This is due to the evolution of ego. If there is no ego, there will be no double awareness. Animals do not have double awareness. If a dog is chasing another dog, it is under nature's compulsion. It does not know that it is running. It runs because instinct compels it to.

So, man has a higher consciousness, and once he has it he has to work towards its evolution. That is why it is said that kundalini is sleeping in mooladhara chakra. It cannot progress beyond this point unless it is pushed.

Discovering your point of evolution

Of course, when the shakti awakens suddenly in mooladhara, it cannot rise immediately. It may wake up and sleep again many times. In the morning you usually have to wake your children several times because they keep going back to sleep. Kundalini behaves in the same way. Sometimes it even ascends to swadhisthana or manipura, only to return to mooladhara again to sleep. However, once the shakti goes beyond manipura chakra there is no going back. Stagnation in a chakra only occurs when there is an obstruction in sushumna or one of the chakras. Kundalini can remain in one chakra for many years, or even for a whole lifetime.

Sometimes, when kundalini gets blocked in a chakra during transit, you begin to exhibit some of the siddhis or psychic powers associated with that chakra. At that time you may not have self-control and understanding of the fact that you are only on the road. When one attains siddhis one is tempted to display them. One may think one is using them for the good of humanity, but this only feeds the ego and clouds one in a thick veil of maya or ignorance, hindering further progress.

If one is manifesting siddhis, one can assume that one has evolved to the chakra which is associated with those siddhis. However, siddhis do not usually manifest when kundalini passes through all the chakras quickly and, if they do, they will not stay long. For a few days you may be able to read the thoughts of others, but then that ability will pass away. For a few days you may be able to heal people, but that will also pass. Psychic powers usually only linger when kundalini gets blocked in a chakra.

Of course, some of our lower chakras may already be functioning without our knowledge. We are all at different levels on the scale of evolution and, therefore, it may not be necessary to start the process of awakening from mooladhara. We say that kundalini is in mooladhara in order to explain the whole concept, but due to your progress in previous lives, or the sadhana your mother or father may have done, you might have been born with your kundalini in manipura. If that is the case, the ascension must take place from that point.

However, as you cannot remember your previous life, similarly you have also forgotten about the state of your kundalini. That is why the gurus teach that kundalini is sleeping in mooladhara. It may be in anahata, but I will always tell you it is in mooladhara and make you do the practices from mooladhara. You might not have any experience of kundalini there. You may go to swadhisthana and manipura and not have any experiences there either. But the moment you go to anahata you suddenly start having experiences.

So before you commence the practices of kundalini yoga, you should try to find out at which point your ascension will actually start. In order to do this, the best method is to concentrate on mooladhara daily for fifteen to thirty minutes, then swadhisthana for fifteen days, manipura for fifteen days and so on up to sahasrara. You will soon discover your point of evolution.

Some people will find concentration on anahata easiest, so that is likely to be their centre. Others will find ajna chakra very powerful and attractive to them, whereas other people will find it easiest to relate to mooladhara, while the higher chakras seem almost impossible to locate. Ultimately you will be able to decide which is your most sensitive chakra, and you will be ready for the next step, which is awakening.

However, there is one important point to be added. Even if a higher chakra such as anahata has awakened at random, you must try to awaken the lower chakras also. The purpose of awakening kundalini and ascending it through all the chakras is to awaken them and their related parts of the brain. Therefore, in order to awaken the whole brain, all the chakras must be awakened.

Awakening the chakras

Awakening of the chakras is a very important event in human evolution. It should not be misunderstood for mysticism or occultism, because with the awakening of the chakras, our consciousness and our mind undergo changes. These changes have significant relevance and relationship with our day to day life.

Our present state of mind is not capable of handling all the affairs of life. Our love and hatred, our relationships with people, are the consequences of the quality of our present mind. It appears that our sufferings, our agonies and frustrations are not so much due to the circumstances of life, but more to the responses of our mind. Therefore, the purpose of awakening the chakras, sushumna and kundalini should be related to our day to day life

Thousands of people are born with awakened chakras and kundalini, and these people virtually rule the whole world. I am not talking about governing or ruling a country; I am saying that they are superior people in every aspect of life. They are the great thinkers, musicians, artists, builders, scientists, research scholars, inventors, prophets, statesmen, and so on.

There are many children born with awakened chakras and kundalini and as they grow up they show different manifestations. However, our materialistic societies consider these manifestations as abnormal and those who display them are subjected to psychoanalysis and psychological scrutiny and treatment.

It is not regarded as abnormal if you undergo personal conflicts in relation to family or work events, but as your mind and consciousness expand, you become very alert and sensitive to all that is happening in your mind, your family, colleagues, society and country, and you cannot ignore even the tiniest things of life. This is not regarded

as normal by ordinary people, but it is a natural consequence that follows awakening of the chakras. One's consciousness becomes very receptive because the frequencies of the mind change.

The manifestation of higher qualities

Every form, sound and colour has a certain frequency. All sounds, colours and forms do not have the same frequency. In the same way, every thought has a frequency, some are of a low frequency and some are of a high frequency. I will give you an example of a high frequency idea.

Once the great scientist Isaac Newton was sitting in a garden and he watched an apple fall from a tree. We may have also seen apples fall from trees and because it does not seem strange to us, we have not given any thought to the process. But Isaac Newton had what we could call philosophic attention. This was a quality of his mind and personality and because of it, when an apple fell before him, he discovered the theory of gravitation.

Why shouldn't you tell lies? Maybe you think there is no harm in it if you can make money, rule a nation or suppress people. The whole contingency depends on the frequency of your consciousness. At a lower frequency of consciousness you will say there is no harm in telling lies, but when the frequency is raised the mind operates at a different level and you cannot really accept that any more. Many people ask the question, "Why shouldn't we kill? After all, when we kill an animal we may be liberating it and enabling it to get a better birth quicker." Our attitudes and way of thinking are a result of the quality of our mind and the particular frequency at which it is functioning.

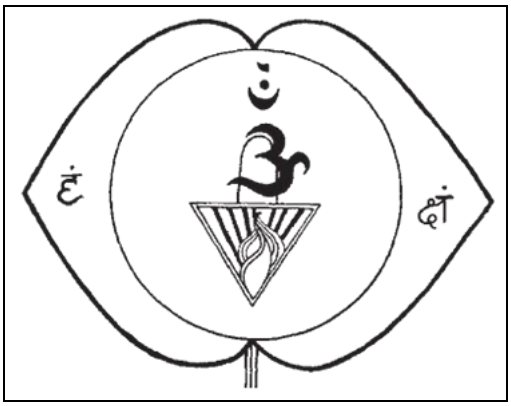
Once Lord Buddha went hunting with his cousin Devadatta. Devadatta shot an arrow at a pigeon and it fell, injured by the arrow. Lord Buddha felt the pain of that bird and immediately rushed to remove the arrow. But Devadatta did not feel the pain; he was very pleased with himself because he had struck his target. Buddha's consciousness had attained a higher frequency vibration, as a result of which he was sensitive to the bird's pain and was therefore manifesting compassion.

Therefore, the higher qualities of love, compassion, charity, mercy and so on are the expressions of a mind which is influenced by awakened chakras. This is precisely the reason why so much importance is given to the awakening of anahata chakra. Of course, every chakra is very important and each chakra confers certain abilities, but you will find that all the scriptural texts place great emphasis on the awakening of anahata, ajna and mooladhara chakras. Yogis emphasize ajna and mooladhara chakras and all of mankind gives emphasis to anahata chakra. When anahata is awakened, we have a sublime relationship with God, with our family members and with every being.

When the chakras are awakened, the mind automatically changes. Your values in life also change and the quality of your love and relationships improve immensely, enabling you to balance out the disappointments and frustrations in life. Therefore, you are able to live a little higher than you do now, and your attitude towards yourself and towards this life is much better.

If awakening of the chakras can bring about unbreakable unity in your family, what more do you need? Do you need a happy family or another husband or wife? Frankly, man needs a happy mind and a happy family. It does not matter what he does or what his children are. Does it really matter if there is little to eat? Happiness and inner contentment are above all, and as far as I can see, true contentment can only be gained by a systematic awakening of the chakras.

Ajna Chakra



Our reflection on the psychic centres, begins from ajna chakra.

According to tradition, mooladhara chakra is generally designated as the first chakra since it is the seat of kundalini shakti. However, there is another system in which consideration and study of the chakras commence from ajna.

Ajna chakra is the point of confluence where the three main nadis or forces – ida, pingala and sushumna, merge into one stream of consciousness and flow up to sahasrara, the crown centre. In mythology, these three nadis are represented by three great rivers – Ganga (ida), Jamuna (pingala) and Saraswati (a subterranean current which represents sushumna). They converge at a place called Prayag or Triveni, which is near present day Allahabad. Indians believe that every twelve years, when the sun is in Aquarius, if one takes a dip at the point of confluence, he or she will be purified. This place of confluence corresponds symbolically to ajna chakra.

When the mind is concentrated at this conjunction, transformation of individual consciousness is brought about by the merging of the three great forces. Individual consciousness is mainly comprised of ego, and it is on

account of ego that we are aware of dualities. As long as there is duality, there cannot be samadhi; as long as you remember yourself, you cannot get out of yourself.
Although there are experiences of trance in the other chakras, there is no merger of the individual ego with the cosmic ego. All throughout you find you are trying to assert yourself behind all the experiences you are having, but when ida and pingala unite with sushumna in ajna chakra, you lose yourself completely.
By this I do not mean that you become unconscious. Your awareness expands and becomes homogeneous. The individual awareness falls flat and you completely transcend the realm of duality.
Therefore, ajna chakra is a very important centre, which you must experience in order to bring about purification of the mind. Once the mind is purified, the experience and awakening of the other chakras can proceed.
There is a certain problem with the awakening of the other chakras. Each of these chakras contains within it a store of karmas or samskaras, which may be both good and bad, positive and negative, painful and pleasant. The awakening of any chakra will bring to the surface an explosion or an expression of these karmas, and not everybody is prepared or ready to face them. Only those who are equipped with reason and understanding can cope. Therefore, it is said that, before you start awakening and manifesting the great force, it is best to purify the mind at the point of confluence. Then, with a purified mind, you can awaken all the other chakras. Therefore, we begin our exposition of the chakras with ajna.

The centre of command

The word *ajna* comes from the Sanskrit root which means 'to know, to obey or to follow'. Literally, ajna means 'command' or 'the monitoring centre'. In astrology ajna is the centre of Jupiter, which symbolizes the guru or preceptor. Amongst the deities, Jupiter is represented by Brihaspati, the guru of the devas and preceptor of the gods. Therefore, this centre is also known as 'the guru chakra'.
Ajna is the bridge which links the guru with the disciples. It represents the level at which it is possible for direct mind to mind communication to take place between two people. It is in this chakra that communication with the external guru, teacher or preceptor takes place. And it is here that the directions of the inner guru are heard in the deepest state of meditation, when all the sense modalities are withdrawn and one enters the state of *shoonya* or void.
This is a state of absolute nothingness, where the empirical experiences of name and form, subject and object, do not penetrate. In this completely static state, the light of the mind is extinguished; the consciousness ceases to function, and no ego awareness remains. This void state is the same as the death experience, and in order to traverse it the voice or command of the guru must be heard in ajna chakra.
Of course, if you are new to spiritual life you will not be facing this problem yet, but when it comes you will find it very difficult to manage. At the moment your problems are just mental – dispersion of mind, worries, anxiety, restlessness, etc., but when the night is dark and you have gone very deep in meditation, losing your individual awareness, the only thing that can guide you at this point is the instructions or command of your guru heard through ajna chakra.
It has also been called 'the eye of intuition', and it is the doorway through which the individual enters the astral and psychic dimension of consciousness. Perhaps the most common name for this chakra is 'the third eye', and the mystical traditions of every age and culture make abundant references to it. It is portrayed as a psychic eye located midway between the two physical eyes and it looks inward instead of outward.
In India, ajna chakra is called *divya chakshu* (the divine eye), *jnana chakshu* or *jnana netra* (the eye of knowledge) because it is the channel through which the spiritual aspirant receives revelation and insight into the underlying nature of existence. It is also called 'the eye of Shiva', for Shiva is the epitome of meditation, which is directly associated with the awakening of ajna chakra.
It is interesting to note that ajna chakra is more active in females than in males. Women are more sensitive, psychic and perceptive and they are often able to predict coming events. However, in most people this inner eye remains closed, and though they see the events of the outside world, knowledge and understanding of truth cannot be gained. In this sense, we are blind to the real possibilities of the world, unable to view the deeper levels of human existence.

The location point

Ajna chakra is located in the brain, directly behind the eyebrow centre. It is at the very top of the spinal cord, at the medulla oblongata. Initially it is very hard to feel the exact location point of ajna, so we concentrate on ajna kshetram, at the mid-eyebrow centre, bhrumadhya. These two centres are directly connected. That is why it has always been an Indian custom to place tilaka, chandan, sindoor or kumkum on the mid-eyebrow centre. Sindoor contains mercury, and when it is applied to the eyebrow centre, a constant pressure is exerted on the nerve which runs from bhrumadhya to the medulla oblongata. Maybe the original purpose for applying these substances has been forgotten by most people today, but it is not a religious mark or even a beauty spot. It is a means by which you can maintain constant conscious and unconscious awareness of ajna chakra.

It should also be mentioned here that the pineal gland is the physical concomitant of ajna chakra and the pituitary gland of sahasrara. Just as the pituitary and pineal glands are intimately connected, so are ajna and sahasrara. We could say that ajna is the gateway to sahasrara chakra. If ajna is awakened and functioning properly, all the experiences happening in sahasrara can be managed well.
The pineal gland acts as a lock on the pituitary. As long as the pineal gland is healthy, the functions of the pituitary are controlled. However, in most of us, the pineal gland started to degenerate when we reached the age of eight, nine or ten. Then the pituitary began to function and to secrete various hormones which instigated our sexual consciousness, our sensuality and worldly personality. At this time we began to lose touch with our spiritual heritage. However, through various yogic techniques, such as trataka and shambhavi mudra, it is possible to regenerate or maintain the health of the pineal gland.

Traditional symbology

Ajna is symbolized by a two-petalled lotus. According to the scriptures, it is a pale colour, light grey like a rainy day. Some say it is white like the moon, or silver, but actually it is an intangible colour. On the left petal is the letter *ham* Öâ and on the right *ksham* àãâ. Ham and ksham are inscribed in a silvery white colour and are the beeja mantras for Shiva and Shakti. One represents the moon or ida nadi and the other the sun or pingala nadi. Below the chakra the three nadis merge – ida on the left, pingala on the right and sushumna in between.
Within the lotus is a perfectly round circle which symbolizes shoonya, the void. Within the circle is an inverted triangle which represents shakti – creativity and manifestation. Above the triangle is a black shivalingam. The shivalingam is not, as many people believe, a phallic symbol. It is the symbol of your astral body. According to tantra and occult sciences, the astral body is the attribute of your personality, and in the form of the shivalingam, it can be one of three colours, depending on the purification or evolution of your consciousness.
In mooladhara chakra, the shivalingam is smoky and ill-defined. It is known as *dhumra lingam*, and we can compare this with our state of consciousness when we live an instinctive life. We have no real concept of ourselves or what we are. Ajna chakra has a black lingam with a very consolidated outline. It is called the *itarakhya lingam*. Here, in ajna, the awareness of 'what I am' is more sharply defined and various capacities are being awakened. In sahasrara, the consciousness is illumined and therefore the lingam there is luminous. It is called the *jyotir lingam*.
When a person of unevolved mind concentrates, he experiences the shivalingam in the form of a smoky column. It comes and then disperses, comes again and disperses, and so on. With deeper concentration, as the restlessness of the mind is annihilated, the lingam becomes black in colour. By concentrating on that black shivalingam, the jyotir lingam is produced within the illumined astral consciousness. Therefore, the black lingam of ajna chakra is the key to the greater spiritual dimension of life.'

Over the shivalingam is the traditional symbol of *Om*, æ with its tail on top and the crescent moon and bindu above that. Om is the beeja mantra and symbol of ajna chakra, and above its form can be seen the *raif*, the trace of sound consciousness. Paramshiva is the deity of ajna chakra and he shines like a chain of lightning flashes. The goddess is the pure minded Hakini whose six faces are like so many moons. Each chakra is considered to possess a *tanmatra* or specific sense of modality, a *jnanendriya* or organ of sense perception, and a *karmendriya* or organ of action. The tanmatra, jnanendriya and karmendriya of ajna chakra are all considered to be the mind. The mind is able to gain knowledge by subtle means, rather than by the input of sense data from the various sense organs, which are the jnanendriyas of the other chakras. The mind perceives knowledge directly via a sixth or intuitive sense, which comes into operation as ajna chakra awakens. This sense is the jnanendriya of the mind. Similarly, the mind can manifest actively without the aid of the physical body. This is the faculty of astral projection, which manifests with the awakening of ajna chakra. Therefore, mind is considered to be the karmendriya of ajna. The mode of operation of this centre is purely mental and so the tanmatra is also the mind. The plane is *tapa loka*, where vestiges of imperfection are purified and the karmas burned away. Along with vishuddhi chakra, ajna forms the basis for *vijnanamaya kosha*, which initiates psychic development.
Often the experience one has when awakening takes place in ajna is similar to that induced by ganja (marijuana) or any other drug of that type. He who meditates on this awakened chakra sees a flaming lamp shining as the morning sun and he dwells within the regions of fire, sun and moon. He is able to enter another's body at will and becomes the most excellent amongst munis, being all-knowing and all-seeing. He becomes the benefactor of all and is versed in all the shastras. He realizes his unity with the Brahman and acquires siddhis. Different results accruing out of meditation on the various centres are collectively realized by meditating on this centre alone.

Ajna and the mind

So, ajna is essentially the chakra of the mind, representing a higher level of awareness. Whenever you concentrate on something, whether it is mooladhara, swadhisthana or manipura chakra, or you concentrate on an external object or an idea, ajna is affected, sometimes mildly, sometimes powerfully, depending on the degree of your concentration. When we visualize or when we dream at night, the inner vision that occurs is through ajna. If you are eating, sleeping or talking and you are not aware of it, then ajna is not operating, but if you are talking and one area of your awareness knows it, this knowing, this awareness is the faculty of ajna.

When you develop ajna, you can have knowledge without the aid of the senses. Normally all knowledge comes to us by means of information the senses conduct to the brain, and a process of classification, logic, and intellect that takes place in the frontal brain. However, the smaller brain, where ajna chakra is situated, has the capacity to acquire knowledge directly without the aid of the indriyas or senses. If it is a very cloudy day, you can know, through logic that it will rain. But if there are no clouds in the sky and still you know beyond a doubt that it will rain, this means your intuition and perception are very acute, and ajna chakra is functioning.

When ajna is awakened, fickleness of the individual mind disperses and the purified *buddhi* (subtle intelligence or higher perception) manifests. Attachment, which is the cause of ignorance and lack of discrimination, drops away, and *sankalpa shakti* (willpower) becomes very strong. Mental resolves fructify almost immediately, provided they are in accordance with individual dharma.

Ajna is the witnessing centre where one becomes the detached observer of all events, including those within the body and mind. Here the level of awareness is developed whereby one begins to 'see' the hidden essence underlying all visible appearances. When ajna is awakened, the meaning and significance of symbols flashes into one's conscious perception and intuitive knowledge arises effortlessly and one becomes a 'seer'.

This is the centre of extrasensory perception where various siddhis manifest according to one's samskaras or mental tendencies. For this reason, ajna chakra is said to resemble a knot directly on top of the spinal cord. According to tantra, this knot is called *rudra granthi*, the knot of Shiva. This knot is symbolic of the aspirant's attachment to the newly developed siddhis which accompany the awakening of ajna. The knot effectively blocks spiritual evolution until attachment to psychic phenomena is overcome and the knot in consciousness is freed.

Understanding cause and effect

Until ajna chakra awakens we are under delusions, we view things incorrectly and we have many great misconceptions about love and attachment, hatred and jealousy, tragedy and comedy, victory and defeat, and many other things. Our fears are unfounded, so are our jealousies and attachments, but still we have them. Our mind is functioning within a limited sphere and we cannot transcend it. Just as we dream at night and our dream experiences are relative, we are also dreaming in our waking state and our experiences are relative. In the same way that we wake from a dream, when ajna awakens, there is also a process of waking up from this present dream we are living, and we can fully understand the relationship between cause and effect.

It is necessary for us to understand the law of cause and effect in relation to our lives, otherwise we are depressed and sorrowful about certain events in life. Supposing you give birth to a child and it dies shortly afterwards. Why did it happen? If a child was meant to die straight after birth, why was it born at all? You can only understand the reason if you understand the laws of cause and effect.

Cause and effect are not immediate events. Each and every action is both a cause and an effect. This life we have is an effect, but what was the cause? You have to discover it, then you can understand the relationship between cause and effect. It is only after awakening of ajna chakra that these laws can be known.

Thereafter your whole philosophical attitude and approach to life changes. No events of life affect you adversely, and the various objects and experiences that come into your life and fade out of your life do not disturb you at all. You participate in all the affairs of life and you live fully, but as a detached witness. Life flows like a fast current and you surrender and move with it.

Moving on from ajna to sahasrara

To reach ajna chakra requires sadhana, discipline, firm belief and persistent effort. With our present state of mind it is not possible to know how to reach sahasrara, but once ajna chakra becomes active, you develop superior perception and you realize how sahasrara can be reached. It is like setting out on a journey from Munger to Marine Drive, Bombay.

The most important stage of the journey is the long train trip to Bombay. Once you are there, reaching Marine Drive is no problem. It is easy to find the way, you just take a taxi and go there. So, in my opinion, it is not important for us to know how to reach sahasrara from ajna chakra, but it is essential for us to know how to awaken ajna.

Mooladhara Chakra

The Sanskrit word *moola* means 'root' or 'foundation' and that is precisely what this chakra is. Mooladhara is at the root of the chakra system and its influences are at the root of our whole existence. The impulses of life rise through the body and flower as the widest expansion of our awareness in the area known as sahasrara. It seems a great paradox that this earthiest and most basic of the chakras guides us to the highest consciousness.

In Samkhya philosophy, the concept of mooladhara is understood as *moola prakriti*, the transcendental basis of physical nature. The whole universe and all its objects must have some basis from which they evolve and to which they return after dissolution. The original source of all evolution is moola prakriti. Mooladhara, as the basis of moola prakriti, is responsible for everything that manifests in the world of name and form.

In tantra, mooladhara is the seat of kundalini shakti, the basis from which the possibility of higher realization arises. This great potential is said to be lying dormant in the form of a coiled serpent. When aroused, it makes its way upward through sushumna nadi in the spinal cord until it reaches sahasrara where the ultimate experience of enlightenment occurs. Therefore, the awakening of mooladhara is considered to be of great importance in kundalini yoga.

The location point

The seat of mooladhara in the male body is located slightly inside the perineum, midway between the scrotum and the anus. It is the inner aspect of that nerve complex which carries all kinds of sensations and is immediately connected with the testes. In the female body, mooladhara chakra lies on the posterior side of the cervix.

In both the male and female bodies, there is a vestigial gland at mooladhara chakra which is something like a knot. In Sanskrit, this is known as *brahma granthi*, the knot of Brahma. As long as this knot remains intact, the energy located in this area is blocked, but the moment the knot is opened, shakti awakens. It is only when the individual awakens to the possibility of divine consciousness, to a greater force and purpose than that of instinctive animal life, that the brahma granthi begins to loosen. Consciousness begins to be liberated from the root centre as the individual's aspiration awakens.

Many people feel hesitant and shy about believing kundalini that is in mooladhara chakra and claim it to be in manipura, because they do not want to associate this holy kundalini shakti with the unholy sexual system. However, scientific investigation shows that this tiny gland in mooladhara chakra contains infinite energy and that many psychic and spiritual experiences originate from mooladhara. Just because mooladhara is situated in the sexual region, this does not make it an impure centre.

Traditional symbology

Mooladhara chakra is traditionally represented by a lotus flower with four deep crimson petals. On each petal is a letter: *vam* ÌãâÂ, *sham* ÍãâÂ, *sham* eãâÂ, *sam* ÔãâÂ, written in gold.

In the pericarp is a yellow square, symbol of the earth element, surrounded by eight golden spears, four at each corner and four at the cardinal points. These spears are said to represent the seven Kula mountains on the base spear of the earth.

The golden yellow square, yantra of the earth element, is supported by an elephant with seven trunks. The elephant is the largest of all land animals and possesses great strength and solidity. These are the attributes of mooladhara, a great, dormant power, resting in a completely stable, solid place. The seven trunks of the elephant denote the seven minerals that are vital to physical functioning; in Sanskrit they are known as *sapta dhatu*. The seven-trunked elephant is the vehicle of the great mind, the great creativity.

Riding on the elephant's back, in the centre of the square, is a deep red inverted triangle. This is the symbol of shakti or creative energy, which is responsible for the productivity and multiplicity of all things. Within the triangle is the swayambhu or dhumra linga, smoky grey in colour. Around this lingam, which represents the astral body, kundalini is coiled three and a half times, her lustre being that of lightning. Three represents the three gunas or qualities of nature in an individual. As long as the three gunas are operating, individuality is functioning within the confinements of ego. The half represents transcendence.

In tantra, this serpent is known as *mahakala*, meaning great or endless time. Here kundalini is lying in the womb of the unconscious, beyond time and space. When kundalini begins to manifest, it enters the dimensions of personality and individuality, and becomes subject to time and space.

That is the awakening of the great serpent power within the individual form, frame and consciousness of man. However, in most people it is dormant. In its awakened state kundalini shakti represents our spiritual

potential, but in its dormant state it represents that instinctive level of life which supports our basic existence. Both possibilities lie in mooladhara.

Resting on top of the inverted triangle is the beeja mantra *lam* šŕâ. Inside the bindu, over the mantra, reside the elephant deva Ganesha and the devi Dakini, who has four arms and brilliant red eyes. She is resplendent like the lustre of many suns rising at the same time. She is the carrier of ever pure intelligence.

The tanmatra or sense associated with mooladhara is smell, and it is here that the psychic smells manifest. The jnanendriya or sensory organ is the nose and the karmendriya, organ of activity is the anus. Mooladhara awakening is often accompanied by itchy sensations around the coccyx or anus, and the sense of smell becomes so acute that offensive odours are difficult to bear.

Mooladhara is the direct switch for awakening ajna chakra. It belongs to *bhuloka*, the first plane of mortal existence and it is the chief centre of *apana*. Mooladhara is also the seat of *annamaya kosha*, the body of nourishment, connected with the absorption of food and evacuation of faeces.

By meditating on kundalini in mooladhara chakra, a man becomes lord of speech, a king among men and an adept in all kinds of learning. He becomes ever free from all diseases and he remains cheerful at all times.

Balancing the nadis

Mooladhara is the base from which the three main psychic channels or nadis emerge and flow up the spinal cord. It is said that ida, the mental force, emerges from the left of mooladhara; pingala, the vital force, from the right; and sushumna, the spiritual force, from the centre. According to tantra, this emanation point is highly volatile. When the positive and negative forces of ida and pingala are completely balanced, an awakening is sparked off here which arouses the dormant kundalini. Usually, this state of balance between ida and pingala nadis can only be achieved sporadically and for short durations. This may be sufficient to trigger off a mild awakening, in which kundalini rises as far as swadhisthana or manipura and then drops back to mooladhara again.

Therefore, the hatha yoga practices, particularly those of pranayama, are very important in kundalini yoga, because they purify and rebalance the psychic flows. Once the state of balance between ida and pingala becomes steady and ongoing, the awakening engendered in mooladhara becomes explosive, and kundalini rises with great force, overcoming all obstacles on its path until it reaches its ultimate destination in sahasrara.

Pranotthana versus kundalini

Many people have experiences in meditation when they feel the shakti rising through the spinal cord from mooladhara to the brain. However, in most cases, this is not the awakening of kundalini, but a release of pranic force called pranotthana. This preliminary awakening starts from mooladhara and ascends the spinal cord via pingala nadi, only partially purifying the chakras, until it reaches the brain where it is usually dispersed.

In this type of awakening the experience of shakti is rarely sustained. However, it does prepare the aspirant for the eventual awakening of kundalini, which is something altogether different and more powerful. After the awakening of kundalini, the individual will never be the same again. Here there is an ascent of force accompanied by a psychic awakening which is permanently accessible. Even though it may fall back again, the potential will always be there.

Mooladhara and sexual expression

Awakening of mooladhara chakra is very important, firstly, because it is the seat of kundalini and, secondly, because it is the seat of great tamas. All of the passions are stored in mooladhara, all the guilt, every complex and every agony has its root here.

This chakra is physiologically related to the excretory, urinary, sexual and reproductive organs. It is very important for everybody to awaken this chakra and get out of it. Our life, desires, actions and accomplishments are controlled by the sexual desires, and whatever we do in life is an expression of that lower chakra. Our lower samskaras and karmas are embedded there and, as in lower incarnations, our whole being is founded on the sexual personality. Dr Sigmund Freud has also emphasized this point. He said that our selection of clothing, food, friends, home furnishings, decor, etc., are influenced by our sexual awareness.

All the schizophrenics, neurotics and crazy people who are ridden with guilt and complexes are people who have not been able to get the shakti out of mooladhara chakra. As a result their lives are imbalanced.

Sexual fulfilment and sexual frustrations control our life. If sexual urges are removed from life, everything will change. Often we react to sexual life on account of bitter experiences and we vow not to follow the same path again. We are fed up and on account of that we say, “No more.” But this is no solution, it is only a reaction and not the permanent structure of our mind.

Unless mooladhara chakra is purified, its corresponding centre in the brain will always remain tamasic. We can live the same type of life as we do today, but we can make it much better. Sexual relationships are not a sin, but the consciousness must awaken and the purpose of the whole act must be transmuted. It is clearly

stated in tantra that the purpose of the sexual act is threefold, and these threefold purposes depend on the level and frequency of one's mind. Some people practise it for procreation, others for pleasure only, because that is the level of their mind. Some practise it to open the window to samadhi. They do not care for procreation or the fulfilment of passion; they are only concerned with awakening an experience and sublimating it.

Through that experience they open the higher centres. So those who practise the normal sexual act must awaken mooladhara chakra first. Also, through the sexual act, a female can awaken mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras if her partner is a yogi. Generally for these chakras to awaken in a man's body, he will have to practise kriya yoga and techniques such as vajroli.

There is another important thing we should all understand. A person who has controlled his lower impulses, a yogi who is practising higher sadhana, does not have to give up his or her partner and the marital relationship. If you think that to be a yogi you must give up sex, why don't you also give up eating and sleeping? Yoga has nothing to do with giving up these things; it is only concerned with transforming their purpose and meaning.

The greatest mistake mankind has been making for thousands of years is that man has been fighting with himself. He wants to renounce sex but he has not been able to do it. Therefore, it is important that mooladhara awakening takes place. Then you can make your mind totally free.

Managing mooladhara awakening

When awakening takes place in mooladhara as the result of yoga practice or other spiritual disciplines, many things explode into conscious awareness in the same way that an erupting volcano pushes to the surface things that were hidden beneath the earth. With the awakening of kundalini, there is simultaneous awakening of things from the unconscious field of human existence which one may not have had prior conscious knowledge of whatsoever.

When mooladhara awakens, a number of phenomena occur. The first thing many practitioners experience is levitation of the astral body. One has the sensation of floating upward in space, leaving the physical body behind. This is due to the energy of kundalini whose ascending momentum causes the astral body to disassociate from the physical and move upward. This phenomenon is limited to the astral and possibly mental dimensions, and this differs from what is normally called levitation – the actual displacement of the physical body.

Besides astral levitation, one sometimes experiences psychic phenomena such as clairvoyance or clairaudience. Other common manifestations include movements or increasing warmth in the area of the coccyx, or a creeping sensation, like something moving slowly up the spinal cord. These sensations result from the ascension of shakti or the awakened kundalini.

In most cases, when the shakti reaches manipura chakra, it begins to descend to mooladhara again. Sometimes the practitioner feels that the energy ascends to the top of the head, but usually only a very small portion of the shakti is able to pass beyond manipura. Repeated earnest attempts are necessary for the further ascension of kundalini, but once kundalini passes manipura chakra, serious obstacles are rarely encountered.

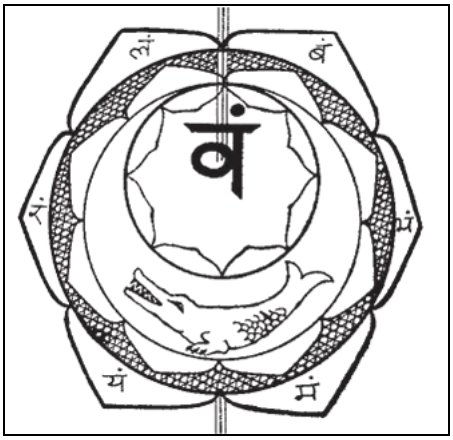
However, when kundalini is ascending from mooladhara to swadhisthana, the sadhaka experiences a crucial period in which all his repressed emotions, especially those of a more primal nature, express themselves. Passions mount during this period and all kinds of infatuations ensue, making the sadhaka extremely irritable and unstable at times. He can be seen sitting quietly in contemplation one moment and hurling objects at someone the next. One day he may sleep deeply for hours together, another day he may get up at one or two in the morning to take a bath and meditate. He becomes very passionate, loud and talkative, while at other times he is silent. At this stage the sadhaka often expresses a great fondness for singing.

During this period of intense psychic and emotional upheaval, the guidance of a qualified and understanding guru is essential. Although some people may regard this emotional turmoil as the indication of a great fall, the guru will assure each and every aspirant that it is an essential part of spiritual life which will accelerate their evolution. If this explosion does not take place, the same purging process will still occur, but very slowly, as problems arise and work themselves out life after life.

Mooladhara is one of the most important and exciting, but also disturbing of the psychic centres which are awakened through the practices of kundalini yoga. For this reason, the awakening of ajna chakra should always accompany mooladhara awakening. The mental faculties of ajna chakra give the practitioner an ability to witness the events of mooladhara awakening objectively, with greater understanding. This makes the whole experience less disturbing and traumatic.

When ajna is awakened, you will find that mooladhara is the easiest of chakras to awaken. The gross mind can concentrate on this centre and manipulate it with ease. As your body and mind begin to break their animal bonds, your awareness expands and you are able to envision the greater possibility of your creative potential.

Swadhisthana Chakra



The Sanskrit word *swa* means 'one's own' and *adhisthana* means 'dwelling place or residence'. Although mooladhara occupies a very important place in the scheme of the chakras, swadhisthana, which is located very near to mooladhara, is also involved in and responsible for the awakening of kundalini shakti in mooladhara. In fact, it is said that previously the seat of kundalini was in swadhisthana, but there was a fall and subsequently mahakundalini came to rest in mooladhara.

The location point

Swadhisthana corresponds to the reproductive and urinary systems in the gross body and is physiologically related to the prostatic or utero-vaginal plexus of nerves. The location of swadhisthana is at the base of the spinal column, at the level of the coccyx or tailbone. This is a small bony bulb which can be felt just above the anus. It is anatomically very close to mooladhara chakra in both the male and female bodies. Swadhisthana kshetram is in the front of the body at the level of the pubic bone.

Traditional symbology

Swadhisthana chakra can be experienced as black in colour, as it is the seat of primary ignorance. However, traditionally it is depicted as a six-petalled vermilion or orange-red lotus. On each petal there is a letter: *bam* °ãâ, *bham* ¼ãâ, *mam* ½ãâ, *yam* ¾ââ, *ram* Àâ, and *lam* šãâ, written in the colour of lightning.

The element of this chakra is water, symbolized by a white crescent moon within the pericarp of the lotus. The crescent moon is formed by two circles which engender two further yantras. The larger has outward turned petals and represents the conscious dimension of existence. On the inside of the crescent moon is a similar petalled but smaller circle with petals facing inwards. This is the unconscious dimension, the store of formless karma. These two yantras are separated by the white crocodile in the crescent moon. The crocodile is the vehicle which carries the whole phantom of unconscious life. It symbolizes the subterranean movement of the karmas. Seated on the crocodile is the beeja mantra *vam* ìãâ, stainless and white.

Within the bindu of the mantra reside the deva Vishnu and the devi Rakini. Vishnu has four arms, his body is a luminous blue colour, he is clothed in yellow raiment and he is beautiful to behold. Rakini is the colour of a blue lotus and she is clothed in celestial raiment and ornaments. In her uplifted arms she holds various weapons and her mind is exalted from drinking nectar. She is the goddess of the vegetable kingdom and, as swadhisthana chakra is closely related to the vegetable world, the observance of a vegetarian diet is said to be an important practice for the awakening of this chakra.

The loka for swadhisthana is *bhuvar*, the intermediate plane of spiritual awareness. The tanmatra or sense connected with this chakra is taste. The jnanendriyas or senses of knowledge are the tongue. The karmendriya or sense of action is the sexual organs, kidneys and urinary system. The chief vayu of swadhisthana is *apana*, which courses throughout the body, and swadhisthana and manipura are the seat of *pranamaya kosha*.

It is said that he who meditates on kundalini in swadhisthana chakra is immediately freed from his internal enemies: lust, anger, greed, etc. His nectar-like words flow in prose and verse and in well-reasoned discourse. He becomes like the sun, illumining the darkness of ignorance.

Home of the unconscious

Swadhisthana is regarded as the substratum or basis of individual human existence. Its counterpart in the brain is the unconscious mind and it is the storehouse of mental impressions or samskaras. It is said that all the karmas, the past lives, the previous experiences, the greater dimension of the human personality that is unconscious, can be symbolized by swadhisthana chakra. Individual being takes root in the unconscious mind, and the many instinctive drives that are felt at the level of this chakra bubble up from the depths of the unconscious.

In tantra there is the concept of the animal, and the master of the animal. In Sanskrit, *pashu* means animal and *pati* means master. *Pashupati* is the master or controller of all the animal instincts. This is one of the names of Lord Shiva, and it is also one of the attributes of swadhisthana chakra. According to mythology, Pashupati is the total unconscious. It has absolute control over mooladhara chakra and the animal propensities during the first milestone of human evolution.

The unconscious principle of swadhisthana should never be considered as an inactive or dormant process. Rather it is a far more dynamic and powerful process than the normal consciousness. When the shakti enters swadhisthana chakra there is an overwhelming experience of this unconscious state. It is different from

mooladhara, which is the manifest expression of that unconscious. In mooladhara, the karmas of the lower stages of our evolution are manifested in the form of anger, greed, jealousy, passion, love, hatred and so on. There we work out that karma, manifesting and expressing it overtly. At the level of swadhisthana, however, there is no conscious activity or manifestation. This is hiranyagarbha, the universal womb, where everything exists in a potential state. The *Rig Veda* says: "In the beginning of creation there was hiranyagarbha, then came all the living beings, all the beings that exist, and He was the protector of all."
In the collective unconscious, the samskaras and the karmas exist in a seed state. For example, yesterday you may have had a pleasant or a painful experience. That experience has become a subconscious process or force which is acting on and colouring your conscious awareness today. There are many experiences like this from the past which we do not consciously recall, but nevertheless they are playing a part in determining our daily behaviour, attitudes and reactions. There are many karmas influencing us in this way, but we remain completely unaware of them.
According to tantra, each and every perception, experience and association is recorded. If you have a quarrel or bitter exchange, that is a very strong registration. However, if you happen to pass someone on the path, look at him and walk on, this is also registered. Many things come within your range of association, and they are all automatically registered. They are not analyzed, but simply filed away in some layer of the mind. All those insignificant and unimpressive karmas, which have been registered automatically in our consciousness, form the total unconscious.
In kundalini yoga, swadhisthana is often regarded as a hindrance in the sense that these karmas lying embedded in the unconscious do not allow the rising kundalini to pass through. After the initial awakening, kundalini returns to dormancy time and time again, solely due to the karmic block at swadhisthana. These karmas are beyond the range of analysis. They have practically no form but they are a great force. To give a crude analogy, suppose there is a big water tank into which you drop all kinds of things. If you were to empty the tank five years later and examine the contents, you would no longer find those same objects which you put in. The matter would still be there but its form would have changed. The collective karma of the unconscious exists in swadhisthana as a form or force somewhat like the matter in this tank.
Therefore, the awakening of swadhisthana presents many difficulties for the sadhaka. When the explosion takes place and swadhisthana begins to erupt, the aspirant is often confused and disturbed by the activation of all this unconscious material. It is absolutely impossible for one to understand these impressions, which are attributed to a disturbed mental condition.
Although the sadhaka may be duly apprehensive about entering this stage of awakening, it is absolutely necessary for his spiritual evolution. Provided he has a competent guru or spiritual guide who knows how to avoid all the pitfalls of this area, swadhisthana can be traversed safely and without any problems.

Swadhisthana and purgatory

When kundalini is residing in swadhisthana chakra, the last vestige of karma is being thrown out and all the negative samskaras express themselves and are expelled. At this time you may be angry, afraid or full of sexual fantasies and passion. You may also experience lethargy, indolence, depression and all kinds of tamasic characteristics. The tendency to procrastinate is very strong and you just want to sleep and sleep. This stage of evolution is known as purgatory, and if you read the lives of many of the great saints, you will find that most of them encountered great turmoil and temptations when they were passing through this stage.
When Lord Buddha was sitting beneath the bodhi tree waiting for enlightenment, he was visited by Mara. Mara is a demonical mythological force, the same force which the Bible refers to as Satan. Just as Satan is a tempter, so Mara is a temptress. This demonical force is not external; it is an internal force which can be found in everybody. It is situated at a very great depth of our personality and is capable of creating illusion. In the Buddhist tradition Mara is represented by a big snake, a grotesque looking person with big teeth and a horrible face, or as beautiful naked women hovering around waiting to embrace an aspirant who is involved in his sadhana. These are all mythological symbols no doubt, but they are realities.
Only those who are fearless and of strong willpower can survive through the temptation. Every great person and every saint has had to undergo this peculiar experience, which is like the ultimate explosion of the seed of life. It seems that the seed of man's cycle of birth and rebirth is situated in swadhisthana chakra. Although most people confront difficulties when they are moving through the terrain of swadhisthana, if one has the grace of guru, indomitable and invincible willpower, has been sincere and not hypocritical in one's spiritual pursuits, is very clear about one's goal and understands what these experiences of purgatory are, then one can face these difficulties properly and overcome them.
If one fluctuates even slightly, kundalini will return to mooladhara and the real awakening will be more difficult. Therefore, in the first stages of sadhana and awakening, one must have a supreme kind of vairagya (detachment). It should not be intellectual vairagya, but the outcome of a thorough analysis of the situations of life. Where is the end to the pleasures of life? Can you ever satisfy your desires? Even when you reach the age

of eighty or ninety and your body can no longer enjoy pleasures, the mind still dwells on them constantly. You can leave all the sensual pleasures, but the taste will remain in the mind.
If the sadhaka understands this truth, that desires can never be satisfied in one lifetime, or even in thousands of lifetimes, then kundalini can pass through swadhisthana safely and relatively fast, and make its way to manipura chakra. Without this understanding, swadhisthana becomes like an impenetrable iron curtain and perhaps only one in thousands can transcend it. Many people awaken kundalini quite easily, but passing the swadhisthana border is another thing; you cannot get through without a visa.

The sexual crisis

I remember reading a book written by a well-known swami* who had experienced difficulties getting through swadhisthana. He wrote that he was sitting all night and nothing but sex and sensual thoughts came to his mind. He dreamed of many women presenting themselves in their naked form, and his whole body was becoming hot and cold, hot and cold. Ultimately he got a headache, and at one point, he thought that my heart would collapse.
Throughout the crisis, his guru's face used to come like a glimpse. The guru's face was stern and expressionless and that used to bring his temperature back to normal. However, this confrontation with the powerful side of his mind continued until morning. At last, when morning came he breathed a sigh of relief. But then, when he sat for meditation in the evening he had mixed feelings – there was fear in his mind and confidence as well.
Day in and day out the mind played its tricks on him. Then one night Parvati came to him. Parvati is the shakti of Lord Shiva, and she is the Divine Mother. He knew she was Parvati, but because she looked so beautiful and she was wearing almost transparent clothing, he began to desire her. Rather than remembering that she was the Divine Mother, his mind was more aware of the form behind the transparent apparel.
Like a flash of lightning the guru showed his face and he regained his senses and prayed, "Mother, withdraw your maya. I can't face these experiences. You are the giver of liberation and you are the creator of illusion. You have the power to cast me back into the cycle of birth and rebirth and you have the power to lift me from this quagmire of ignorance."
As he prayed, tears rolled down his face and he felt a cool breeze passing through the interior of his body. The whole panorama vanished and he understood that kundalini had passed through swadhisthana and was now heading towards manipura.

Transforming the primal energy

When no sexual desires of any kind manifest in an aspirant any more, and when there is no more personal attraction, that means kundalini has passed beyond swadhisthana chakra. However, when you are dealing with the subject of sex, your understanding must be very thorough. Although you may not have any sexual awareness at the moment, that does not mean your desires have been exterminated. They might be in a suppressed state. There is an automatic process of suppression in the human constitution, and that is inherent in our own mental being.
Indian rishis have stated that sexual awareness and desires can manifest at any stage of evolution. They are very acute and clearly expressed when one is in swadhisthana and having continual fantasies, but sexual awareness never really dies because it is fuelled by the primal energy which is present all throughout. Sex is only an expression of that, and therefore it can manifest at any stage, and one should never think that one has transcended it. It is even present when one is in the highest state of consciousness. The only difference is that in swadhisthana it is in a very disturbed state, whereas in the higher centres of evolution it is in a seed form. After all, what is bhakti or devotion; what is union? They are the sublimated pure form of sexual energy.
Energy at different levels is known by different names. At the highest level it is called spiritual experience. On the emotional level it is known as love. On the physical level it is known as sex, and at the lowest level it is known as avidya or ignorance. So therefore, when you talk about sex, you must understand that it is only a particular formation of energy. Just as curd, butter and cheese are different formations of the one thing – milk, energy has different manifestations. Matter is the grossest manifestation of energy; in the ultimate state, matter is energy. Therefore, energy and matter are intra-convertible. A thought is an object and an object is a thought. This body is consciousness and consciousness has become this body. In the same way that you understand this, you have to reanalyze and redefine sexual awareness.
The rishis say that the same energy which flows through passion, when channelled, manifests as devotion. Channel this same energy again and it manifests as spiritual experience. That is why spiritual aspirants love God in various manifestations. Some picture him as a father, a mother, a child, a friend, husband or lover. In this way, they can sublimate the form of their emotional energy and even transform the primal energy into a divine experience.

Psychic propensities of swadhisthana

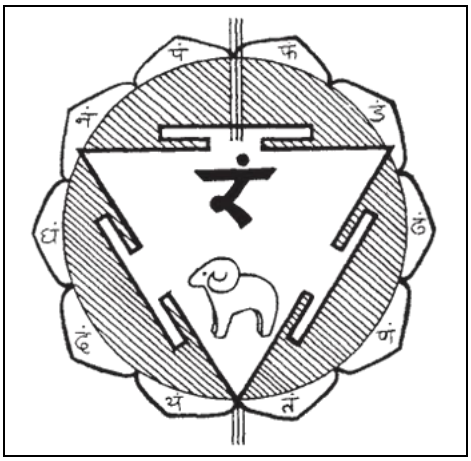
At a higher level swadhisthana acts as the switch for bindu. This is the point where primal sound originates. Any awakening in swadhisthana is simultaneously carried up to bindu, where it is experienced in the form of the sound body, which is an important psychic attribute of this chakra.

According to the tantric texts, there are many other psychic propensities gained through the awakening of swadhisthana chakra. These include: loss of fear of water, dawning of intuitive knowledge, awareness of astral entities, and the ability to taste anything desired for oneself or others.

It must be remembered that up to swadhisthana, the consciousness is not yet purified. Due to ignorance and confusion, the psychic powers awakened at this level are often accompanied by the maleficent mental attributes. What happens here when the aspirant tries to manifest or express himself through the psychic medium is that more often than not it becomes a vehicle for personal and lower tendencies, rather than for the divine.

The sum and substance is this – awakening of kundalini is not a difficult task, but to get beyond swadhisthana is. For that, you must improve the general background of your psycho-emotional life. Once you pass swadhisthana you will not have to face any explosive traumas again, but there will be other difficulties further on. Kundalini is unlikely to descend again as it is destined to move on, but the problems you will confront will be concerned with siddhis, and they are more difficult to subdue.

Manipura Chakra



Manipura is derived from two Sanskrit words: *mani* meaning 'jewel' and *pura* meaning 'city'. Therefore, manipura literally means 'city of jewels'. In the Tibetan tradition, this chakra is known as *mani padma*, which means 'jewelled lotus'.

Manipura is a very important centre as far as the awakening of kundalini shakti is concerned. It is the centre of dynamism, energy, willpower and achievement and it is often compared to the dazzling heat and power of the sun, without which life on earth would not exist. In the same way that the sun continually radiates energy to the planets, manipura chakra radiates and distributes pranic energy throughout the entire human framework, regulating and energizing the various activities of organs, systems and processes of life.

When deficient, it is more like the glowing embers of a dying fire rather than a powerful intense blaze. In this state the individual is rendered lifeless, vitality deficient and devoid of energy. He will be hindered by poor health, depression and lack of motivation and commitment in life. Therefore, the awakening of manipura is an important precedent, not only for the sadhaka, but for anyone who wishes to enjoy life more fully.

The location point

Manipura chakra is located directly behind the navel on the inner wall of the spinal column. The kshetram is situated right at the navel. This chakra is anatomically related to the solar plexus, which controls the digestive fire and heat regulation in the body.

Traditional symbology

Manipura is symbolized by a ten petalled bright yellow lotus. Some of the tantric texts say the lotus petals are the colour of heavily laden rain clouds. On each petal one of the ten letters: *pham* ¹ãŠâ, *dam* ¡â, *dham* ¤â, *nam* ¥ãâ, *tam* ¦ãâ, *tham* ©ãâ, *dam* xâ, *dham* £ãâ, *nam* ¶ãâ, *pam* ¹ãâ, is inscribed in the colour of the blue lotus. In the centre of the lotus is the region of fire, symbolized by an inverted fiery red triangle which shines like the rising sun. The triangle has a bhupura or swastika in the shape of a T on each of its three sides. In the lower apex is the ram, vehicle for manipura, symbolizing dynamism and indomitable endurance. Seated on the ram is the beeja mantra of manipura – *ram* Àâ. In the bindu reside the deva Rudra and the devi Lakini.

Rudra is of a pure vermilion hue and he is smeared with white ashes. He is three-eyed and of an ancient aspect. Lakini, the benefactress of all, is four-armed, of dark complexion and radiant body. She is clothed in yellow raiment, decked with various ornaments and exalted from drinking nectar.

The tanmatra of manipura is sight. The jnanendriya or organ of knowledge is the eyes, and the karmendriya or organ of action is the feet. These two organs are closely linked in the sense that vision and wilful action are interdependent.

Manipura belongs to *swaha loka*, the heavenly plane of existence. This is the last of the mortal planes. Its guna is predominantly rajas (activity, intensity, acquisitiveness), whereas the lower chakras are predominantly tamasic (lethargic and negative). The tattwa is agni, the fire element, which is very important in kundalini yoga. Its vayu is *samana*, which digests and distributes the essence of food to the entire system. Manipura and swadhisthana chakras are the seat of *pranamaya kosha*.

In the yogic scriptures it is said that the moon at bindu secretes nectar which falls down to manipura and is consumed by the sun. This results in the ongoing process of degeneration which leads to old age, disease and death. This process can be reversed in the human body by adopting certain yogic practices which send the pranic forces in manipura back up to the brain. Otherwise the vitality is quickly dissipated and lost in the mundane affairs of life.

It is said that meditation on manipura chakra leads to knowledge of the entire physical system. When this centre is purified and awakened, the body becomes disease-free and luminous, and the yogi's consciousness does not fall back into the lower states.

The centre of awakening

According to the Buddhist tradition and many of the tantric texts, the actual awakening of kundalini takes place from manipura and not from mooladhara. In some tantric traditions, mooladhara and swadhisthana are not referred to at all, as these two centres are believed to belong to the higher realms of animal life, whereas from manipura onwards, higher man predominates. So mooladhara is the seat of kundalini, swadhisthana is the abode, and the awakening takes place in manipura. This is because from manipura the awakening becomes ongoing and there is practically no danger of a downfall or devolution of consciousness. Up to this point, kundalini may awaken and arise many times, only to recede again, but awakening of manipura is what we call a confirmed awakening.

To stabilize the awareness in manipura and sustain the awakening there is not easy. The sadhaka must be very earnest and persevering in his effort to bring about further awakenings. I have found that in sincere sadhakas, kundalini is mostly in manipura. If you are exposed to spiritual life, practise yoga, have a keen desire to find a guru and to pursue a higher life, side by side with the work you are doing, it means kundalini is not in mooladhara. It is in manipura or one of the higher centres.

Union of prana and apana

In tantra there is an important branch known as *swara yoga*, the science of the breath, which is used to bring about the awakening of kundalini. According to this system, all the pranas in the body are classified into five dimensions, *prana, apana, vyana, udana* and *samana*. At the navel region, there is an important junction where two of these vital forces, prana and apana, meet.

The prana moves upwards and downwards between the navel and throat, and the apana flows up and down between the perineum and navel. These two movements are normally coupled together, like two railway carriages, so that with the inspired breath, prana is experienced moving up from the navel to the throat, while apana is simultaneously moving up to the navel centre from mooladhara. Then with exhalation, prana descends from the throat to the navel and apana descends from manipura to mooladhara. In this way prana and apana are continually functioning together and changing direction with the flow of the inspired/expired breath.

This movement can be readily experienced through relaxed breath awareness in the psychic passages between the perineal region, the navel and the throat centres in the front of the body. By gaining control through particular kriyas, the apana is separated from prana, and its flow is reversed to bring about the awakening of the chakra. Whereas the apana normally descends from manipura during expiration, the flow is reversed so that prana and apana both enter the navel centre simultaneously from above and below, and are joined. This is the union of prana and apana.

It is said that when kundalini wakes up in mooladhara it begins to ascend spirally, like a hissing snake. However, the awakening of kundalini in manipura takes place like a blast, as the prana and the redirected apana meet in the navel centre. It is like two great forces colliding with each other and then fusing together at this pranic junction, manipura kshetram. As they fuse together, they create heat and an energy or force which is conducted directly back from the navel to the manipura chakra within the spinal cord. It is this force which awakens manipura chakra. The force of sadhana has caused a total reorganization of the pranic flow in the body, so that mooladhara is transcended and the new base of kundalini is manipura chakra.

Manipura in perspective

Human evolution takes place through seven planes in the same way that kundalini awakens in the seven chakras. When the consciousness evolves to manipura, the sadhaka acquires a spiritual perspective. He gets a glimpse of the higher lokas or planes of existence.

From mooladhara and swadhisthana, the higher planes cannot be seen. Therefore, the limitations of perception in the lower planes are responsible for the misuse of siddhis or powers which begin to manifest there. Only

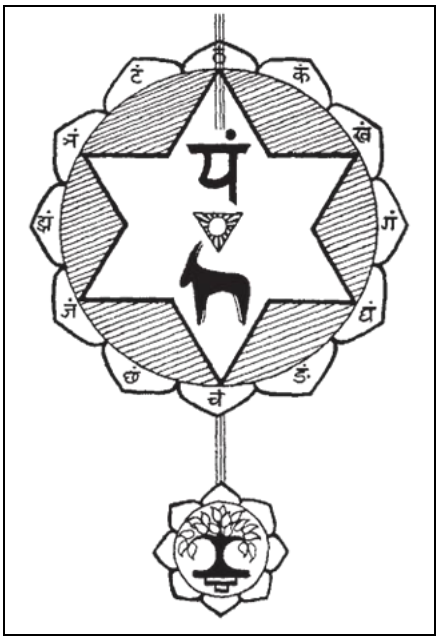
when the sadhaka reaches manipura is he able to visualize the infinite state of consciousness which is no longer gross and empirical. It stretches before him endlessly, full of beauty, truth and auspiciousness. In the face of this vision, all his views are completely changed. The personal prejudices, complexes and biases drop away as the endless beauty and perfection of the higher worlds dawn within the consciousness.

As long as the evolution is in the planes of mooladhara and swadhisthana, one has mental and emotional problems and sees the whole world correspondingly, but as soon as one transcends these planes and goes to manipura, all the bliss, noble views, perfect ideas and greater possibilities of human consciousness are seen. Then, naturally, whatever one thinks and does will be influenced by this higher vision.

This is why the psychic powers that come to the sadhaka after having awakened and established the kundalini in manipura are really benevolent and compassionate, whereas those which manifest in mooladhara and swadhisthana are still tinged by the dark aspect of the lower mind.

The powers gained through the awakening of manipura chakra are the ability to create and destroy, self-defence, the acquisition of hidden treasures, no fear of fire, knowledge of one's own body, freedom from disease and the ability to withdraw the energy to sahasrara.

Anahata Chakra



In kundalini yoga, anahata chakra is a centre of great importance. This is because although awakening from manipura is constant, kundalini has to remain in anahata for quite a long time. It is said that in this present age, the consciousness of mankind is passing through a phase of anahata. This means that in many people anahata chakra has started to function.

However, there is a difference between functioning and awakening. In most people, anahata is not completely active, but it functions slightly. Mooladhara, on the other hand, is very active and almost awake in the majority of people today.

The word *anahata* actually means 'unstruck' or 'unbeaten'. This centre is known as such because of its relationship with the heart, which throbs, beats or vibrates to a constant unbroken rhythm. It is said in many of the scriptures that there is a sound which is non-physical and non-empirical, which is transcendental in nature, and this sound is endless and unbroken in the same way that the heart beats faithfully and continuously from before birth up until death.

The location point

Anahata chakra is situated in the spinal column on the inner wall, directly behind the centre of the chest. The kshetram is the heart, and although anahata is known as the heart centre, this should not be misinterpreted to mean the biological heart. Although its physiological component is the cardiac plexus of nerves, the nature of this centre is far beyond the physiological dimension.

In yoga the heart centre is also known as *hridayakasha*, which means 'the space within the heart where purity resides'. This chakra is a very delicate centre, for it is directly connected with that part of the brain which is responsible for all the creative sciences and fine arts such as painting, dance, music, poetry, and so on.

Traditional symbology

Although most of the tantric texts say that anahata is a shining crimson colour, like that of the bandhuka flower, my experience is that it is blue in colour. It has twelve petals and on each petal a letter is inscribed in vermilion: *kam* ìãŠâ, *kham* Œãâ, *gam* Øãâ, *gham* Üãâ, *ngam* Ýâ, *cham* Þãâ, *chham* œâ, *jam* •ãâ, *jham* ¢ãâ, *nyam* šãâ, *tam* ›â and *tham* aâ. The inner region is hexagonal in shape, representing the air element, *vayu* tattwa. It is made up of two interlaced triangles, symbolizing the union of Shiva and Shakti. The inverted triangle is the symbol of creativity, Shakti; and the upright triangle represents consciousness or Shiva. The vehicle, located within the hexagon, is a black antelope, which is known for its alertness and fleetness of foot. Above it is situated the beeja mantra *yam* ¾ãâ, which is dark grey in colour. Within the bindu of this mantra is the presiding deva, Isha (Lord in an all-pervading form), who is lustrous like the sun. With him is the devi Kakini (benefactress of all), who is yellow in colour, three-eyed, four-armed, auspicious and exhilarated.

In the centre of the pericarp of the lotus is an inverted triangle, within which burns the *akhanda jyotir*, unflickering eternal flame, representing the *jivatma* or individual soul. Some of the tantric texts say there is a shivalingam inside the triangle. It is called the *bana linga* and is like shining gold.

Below the main lotus of anahata is a subsidiary lotus with red petals, which contain the *kalpa taru* or wish-

fulfilling tree. Many saints have recommended visualization of the kalpa taru or of a still lake within the anahata hexagon. Upon this lake there is a beautiful blue lotus. You may have seen this symbol because it is utilized by several ashrams and spiritual missions.

Anahata belongs to *maha loka*, the first of the immortal planes. Its vayu is *prana*, which passes through the nose and mouth, and its tanmatra is feeling or touch. The jnanendriya is the skin and the karmendriya is the hands. Anahata represents *manomaya kosha*, controlling the mind and emotions.

Vishnu granthi, the second psychic knot, is located at this heart centre. It represents the bondage of emotional attachment, the tendency to live one's life making decisions on the strength of the emotions and feelings, rather than in the light of the spiritual quest. Vishnu granthi is untied as the emotions harmonize and enhance, rather than oppose, the spiritual awakening.

It is said that he who meditates on the heart lotus is foremost among yogis and adored by women, that he is pre-eminently wise and full of noble deeds. His senses are completely under control and his mind can be engrossed in intense concentration. His speech is inspired and he has the ability to enter another's body at will.

Fate and free will

Tantric scriptures say that in anahata thoughts and desires of the individual are materialized and fulfilled. There are basically two ways of thinking: dependently or independently. Up to manipura chakra the first approach holds true, but once the shakti pierces anahata, the second approach takes precedence.

As long as the consciousness is centred in the lower chakras, you will remain completely dependent on what is already enjoined for you, your fate or destiny, *prarabdha karma*. Even the awakening of the lower chakras does not make much difference. Once the consciousness ascends through manipura, you become master over some of the situations of life, but you are still influenced and bound by your prarabdha karma. You know that you can escape it, but you do not know how.

The lower chakras belong to the empirical world of body, mind and sense. People who accept their fate as inevitable have not yet transcended mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras. Manipura is still considered earthly, although it lies at the boundary between mortal and immortal planes. Those who actively shape their own destiny through strength of will channelled in a positive direction, which leads to realization and achievement, are in the realm of manipura.

Anahata chakra is almost completely beyond these empirical dimensions. Here, one realizes that fate is of course real, but still one can go totally beyond its dictates. It is like throwing something into the sky. If you are able to hurl that object right out of the gravitational field, then it will no longer be pulled down by the earth's magnetic forces. Just as a rocket is launched at tremendous speed in order to go beyond the gravitational pull of the earth, so the consciousness is accelerated in anahata to the speed of free will in order to transcend the pull of latent samskaras.

It is only when you reach anahata chakra that you become a yogi. Up until then, whether you are in mooladhara, swadhisthana or manipura, you are a yoga practitioner. In anahata you become a yogi because you are completely established in yogic consciousness and you depend solely upon the power of your own consciousness, rather than on anything that is external or concerning faith.

Wish fulfilment

In anahata chakra, the freedom to escape from a preordained fate and to determine one's own destiny becomes a reality. According to the tantras, at the root of anahata there is a wish-fulfilling tree known as the *kalpa taru* or *kalpa vriksha*. When this tree starts to fructify, whatever you think or wish comes true. Ordinarily we have many wishes, but they rarely assume more than the air of a daydream. However, if they were all to become realities, we would quickly start to question whether we want our wishes fulfilled at all. Most people prefer to depend on fate rather than take responsibility for creating their own destiny, and well they should. There is a fine story which is often told to illustrate this.

Once a traveller was sitting underneath a tree. He was feeling very tired and wanted to have a drink. So he thought of a clear stream, and immediately he heard the trickle of water flowing beside him. After drinking some water, he thought he would like to have a little food to satisfy his hunger, and that appeared beside him also. Then, as he was feeling tired and thought he would like to rest, there appeared before him a nice bed, and so he went to sleep. The foolish man did not know that he had come to rest beneath the wish-fulfilling tree. In the evening when he awoke, the sun had already set and night had fallen. He got up and the thought came to his mind: "Oh, it is terribly dark, perhaps the tigers will come and eat me," and so they did.

This is what can happen to anyone who awakens the wish-fulfilling capacity without sufficient preparation. If the consciousness awakens in anahata, but you do not know the powers of your mind, or you possess negative, pessimistic attitudes, dark approaches to life, apprehensions, fears and many other negative mental tendencies, then you will immediately fall prey to them. If this happens, you risk the possibility of falling back from anahata. And if you fall from anahata, there is hardly any chance of making a second start. To avoid a downfall at this point, it is necessary to always

remain as alert as the antelope, which is sensitive to each and every sound. The antelope is the vehicle of anahata for this reason; it is not the symbol of restlessness, but of alertness.

When whatever you wish for comes true, you are very happy, but at the same time, it is necessary to constantly analyze your attitude towards yourself and others. You have to be careful of doubts. For example, if you develop a few palpitations of the heart and think: "Perhaps I am developing angina pectoris," or a pain in the abdomen and think: "Now I have appendicitis or gall bladder disease," such thoughts may bring many problems and disorders in their wake. You must also guard against doubts concerning others: "Maybe that man is my enemy," "My son is sick, maybe he will die," "My friend has not contacted me, he must have had an accident." It is important to have a firm and alert control over the mental tendencies and fantasies of the mind.

Thoughts concerning the body, husband, wife, children, family, social, economic or political situations come to us all the time. If kundalini is asleep, these thoughts have no power, but when kundalini awakens in anahata chakra, all these thoughts suddenly become realities. Unless we are ever alert at this stage we will place our own destructive hand on our head.

In the tantric text *Saundarya Lahari*, this wish-fulfilling process is aptly described as the *chintamani,* or wish-fulfilling gem. Here *chinta* applies to the 'process of selective thought' and *mani* means 'jewel'. Therefore, chintamani means the 'jewel' of correct and positive thinking. In this text, anahata is described as the garden of devas. At the centre is a small divine lake inside which is the chintamani. It is not necessary to obtain this jewel; as long as you can realize your proximity to it that is enough, then whatever you think comes true.

Develop a new way of thinking

When anahata chakra blooms and awakens, you must have very good *sangha*, associations. You should never associate with people who depend on their fate. Rather, you should always associate with those who depend on faith. You must have unswerving faith in the power of your own will. Even in the face of tremendous odds, be unflinching, then you will succeed. Willpower is never the outcome of suggestion. If you are ill and you say a hundred times, "I am well, I am well, I am well . . .," this is called autosuggestion. It is not will. Will is something more than this. "Even if my son is suffering from the worst disease and medical science has declared that he is about to die, I know he will not." This is how you have to think and use your will.

The first preparation, therefore, with regards to awakening anahata is to change your entire way of thinking. If you are the type of person whose thoughts and wishes often come true, even when conditions seem to be opposed to that outcome, then it is necessary to develop a certain amount of caution along with a new way of thinking.

You must become extremely optimistic and positive, always full of hope. You must never dwell in the negativity of the mind. Physically, mentally and spiritually you must be completely at peace with yourself, others and the whole community at large. Though the world is full of conflicts, contradictions and deep animosities, you have to always feel deep peace throughout your being. Never be negative about any situation. Even if you meet a murderer, a hopeless gambler or a debaucher, to you he is still a good person.

Every situation is a good one for you and the future is always bright. In all circumstances this must be your attitude. It makes no difference whether you are amidst poverty, suffering, disease, conflict, divorce, emotional crises and discord. It is all part of the good, therefore you accept it.

You have to think only one thought resolutely: "The whole world is in me," or "I am in everyone." When you are able to develop this universal sort of attitude, the kundalini will shine forth and pierce the fifth chakra – vishuddhi, the centre of immortality. This is the importance and significance of anahata. Perhaps the best mantra for the heart centre is Om shanti. *Om* is the universal cosmic vibration which permeates the whole creation and *shanti* means peace.

Love without expectations

Anahata chakra awakens refined emotion in the brain and its awakening is characterized by a feeling of universal, unlimited love for all beings. Of course, there are many people in the world who practise kindness and charity, but they have selfishness. Their charity is not an expression of anahata chakra and spiritual compassion, it is human compassion. When you have human compassion you open hospitals and feeding centres or you give clothing, money and medicine in charity, but that is human charity.

How can we tell the difference between human charity and spiritual charity? In human charity there is always an element of selfishness. If I want to make you a Hindu by giving you things, this is a manifestation of human charity. Or if I want to make you my followers I can show you great kindness, but that is human kindness. However, when anahata awakens all your actions are controlled and ruled by unselfishness and you develop spiritual compassion. You understand that love does not involve bargaining; it is free of expectation.

Every form of love is contaminated by selfishness, even the love you have for God, because you are expecting something from him. Perhaps in this world, the love with minimum selfishness is a mother's love. Of course, it is not totally unselfish, but because a mother's sacrifices are so great, her love has minimum selfishness.

The qualities of anahata chakra can be awakened by many methods. The symbol of anahata chakra is a blue lotus,

and in the centre are two interlaced triangles. This lotus represents the opening of one's heart. Music, art, sculpture, literature and poetry are all important aids to the development of anahata chakra. And when anahata opens, your understanding of all beings changes a lot. There is a story about it.

In India there is a traditional pilgrimage in which sadhakas go north to the source of Ganga, take some water from there and carry it across the continent to South India. Here they go to a temple and pour the holy water over a shivalingam. The distance they have to cover in this pilgrimage is almost three thousand miles.

Once a saint had almost completed this pilgrimage and he was carrying a container full of Ganga water. As he entered the precincts of the temple where he was to bathe the shivalingam, he found a donkey which was desperately pining for water. Immediately he opened his can and gave water to the donkey. His fellow travellers cried out, "Hey, what are you doing? You have brought this water such a long way to give a bath to Lord Shiva and here you are giving it to an ordinary animal!" But the saint did not see it that way. His mind was working at a different and much higher frequency.

Here is another example: Once Lord Buddha was going for an evening walk. He came across an old man and he was greatly moved by the sufferings of old age. Next he saw a dead person, and again he was moved very much. How many times do we see old people? Are we moved in the same way that Lord Buddha was? No, because our minds are different. Awakening of a chakra alters the frequency of the mind and immediately influences our day to day relationships with people and our surroundings.

Love overcomes ego

Anahata chakra can be aroused and awakened by the practice of bhakti yoga, in which there is no place for egotistical consciousness. Your devotion can be for God or guru. It is easy to practise devotion to God because he does not check your ego, or even if he does, you do not know it. But when you practise devotion to the guru, the first thing he does is 'egodectomy'. So when you direct your devotion to guru, you have lots of difficulties. If you only meet your guru from time to time, the problems are invisible, but if you live with him, the problems are greater. Therefore, many people think it is safer to have a guru who is no longer living.

Not only is ego an obstacle on the spiritual path, it is also the greatest barrier to harmony and cordiality in family and social life. Therefore, in order to treat the ego there are two very important paths. One is karma yoga and the other is bhakti yoga. Ego can never be removed by intellectual persuasion. It can never be subdued or eliminated unless you develop the highest form of love. Just as the sun removes darkness, love removes ego. These two can never coexist.

So, in order to induce anahata awakening we should definitely practise bhakti yoga. When kundalini is established in anahata there is absolute devotion and even a confirmed atheist will change. However, awakening of anahata is not only a way to God or guru, it is also a way to complete unity and harmony in family life. Therefore, in India, most Hindu women are initiated into bhakti yoga at a very young age. When they are four to six years old they are taught to practise devotion to Lord Shiva, Krishna, Rama, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Durga and so on, because it is easier for women to develop anahata chakra. For this reason, women are also told to use anahata as their centre for meditation, whereas men are generally advised to concentrate on ajna chakra. Anahata is the seat of human love and the seat of divine love. They are not two things, they are one and the same.

Psychic propensities of anahata chakra

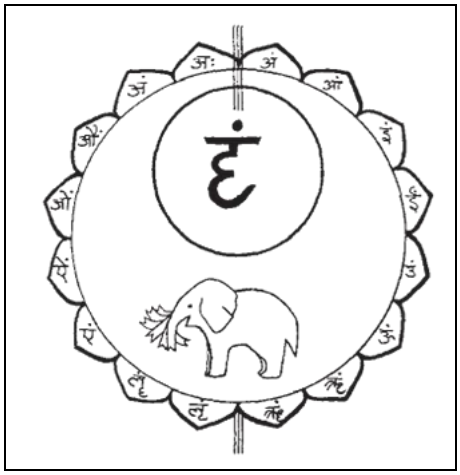
Prior to the awakening of anahata there may be frequent pain in the chest or irregular functioning of the heart, such as accelerated pulse. However, rather than feeling ill, one feels healthy and active and requires little sleep. One obtains complete emotional balance and the ability to communicate externally as well as internally. Voices or sounds coming from other realms may be heard, and buzzing or humming sounds and the music of a flute may be experienced.

The sadhaka may become an inspired poet, artist or singer. He may manifest clairvoyant/clairaudient or psychokinetic ability, or he may be able to conquer people by the immensity of love he emits. A person in anahata is generally very sensitive to the feelings of others and his sense of touch is strongly developed. He also has the ability to heal others, either by touch or by generating his own spiritual energy to other people. Many people who perform miraculous healings do so through the agency of anahata chakra.

With anahata awakening one develops non-attachment to worldly things and a constant feeling of optimism, understanding that good and bad coexist, but there is also a world beyond this duality. After ridding oneself of attachment, the mind becomes relaxed, free and peaceful. And with the discovery of true freedom, pleasures of dualistic life become meaningless.

Vishuddhi Chakra

Vishuddhi chakra is known as the 'purification centre'. The Sanskrit word *shuddhi* means 'to purify', and in this chakra the purifying and harmonizing of all opposites takes place. Vishuddhi is also known as the



'nectar and poison centre'. Here, the nectar which drips down from bindu is said to be split into the pure form and the poison. The poison is discarded and the pure nectar then nourishes the body, ensuring excellent health and longevity.

Vishuddhi represents a state of openness in which life is regarded as the provider of experiences that lead to greater understanding. One ceases to continually avoid the unpleasant aspects of life and seek the pleasant. Instead there is a flowing with life, allowing things to happen in the way that they must. Both poison and nectar are consumed in vishuddhi chakra, and they are understood to be but parts of a greater cosmic whole. Proper understanding and true discrimination dawn out of this equal acceptance of the dualities and polarities of life.

The more abstract aspect of vishuddhi is the faculty of higher discrimination. Hence any communication received telepathically can be tested here for its correctness and accuracy. Similarly, vishuddhi allows us to differentiate between realization coming into our consciousness from the higher levels of knowledge, and the mere babblings of our unconscious mind and wishful thinking.

Vishuddhi chakra is often treated as an insignificant chakra in the scheme of kundalini yoga. People are more concerned with mooladhara, anahata and ajna, and therefore the significance of vishuddhi is easily disregarded. In fact, the reverse attitude may even be more appropriate.

The location point

Vishuddhi chakra is in the cervical plexus directly behind the throat pit. Its kshetram is in the front of the neck, at the throat pit or thyroid gland. The physiological concomitants of vishuddhi are the pharyngeal and laryngeal nerve plexi.

Traditional symbology

Some tantric texts say vishuddhi chakra is represented by a dark grey coloured lotus, however, it seems to be more commonly perceived as a purple lotus of sixteen petals. These sixteen petals correspond to the number of nadis associated with this centre. On each petal one of the Sanskrit vowels is inscribed in crimson: *am* ,ãâ, *aam* ,ããâ, *im* ƒâ, *eem* ƒÃâ, *um* „â, *oom* „Šâ, *rim* ¨ãÉâ, *reem* ¨ãÉðâ, *lrim* šãðâ, *lreem* šãð¦â, *em* †â, *aim* †ò, *om* ,ãàò, *aum* ,ããö, *am* ,ãâ, *ah* ,ã:. In the pericarp of this lotus is a circle which is white like the full moon, representing the element of ether or *akasha*. This ethereal region is the gateway to liberation for one whose senses are pure and controlled. Within this moon shape is a snow white elephant, also symbolic of the akasha element. This is considered as the vehicle of consciousness of this plane, and the aspirant may picture himself upon its back. The beeja mantra is *ham* Öâ, also pure white, which is the seed sound or vibration of the etheric element.

The presiding deity of vishuddhi is Sadashiva, who is snow white, three-eyed and five-faced, with ten arms and clothed in a tiger's skin. The goddess is Sakini who is purer than the ocean of nectar that flows down from the moon region. Her raiment is yellow and in her four hands she holds the bow, the arrow, the noose and the goad.

Vishuddhi belongs to the fifth loka, the plane of *janah*. Its vayu is *udana* which lasts till the end of life and rises upwards, and along with ajna chakra, vishuddhi forms the basis for *vijnanamaya kosha*, which initiates psychic development. The tanmatra or sense is hearing and the jnanendriya or organ of knowledge is the ears. The karmendriya or organ of action is the vocal chords.

In nada yoga, the branch of kundalini yoga concerned with sound vibration, vishuddhi and mooladhara are considered to be the two basic centres of vibration. In nada yoga the ascent of consciousness through the chakras is integrated with the musical scale. Each note of the scale corresponds to the vibratory level of consciousness of one of the chakras. This scale, often chanted in the form of mantras, bhajans and kirtans, is a very powerful means of awakening kundalini in the different chakras.

Mooladhara is the first and vishuddhi is the fifth level of vibration in the scale. They produce the basic sounds or vowels around which the music of the chakras is constructed. These vowel sounds, pictured on the sixteen petals of the yantra, are the primal sounds. They originate from vishuddhi chakra and are directly connected to the brain.

By meditation on vishuddhi chakra, the mind becomes pure like the akasha. One becomes a great sage, eloquent and wise and enjoys uninterrupted peace of mind. Amrit can be felt as a cold fluid flowing into the chakra and the aspirant becomes free from disease and sorrow; he is compassionate, full of bliss and long lived.

Nectar and poison

In the tantric scriptures it is said that within bindu at the back of the head, the moon is secreting a vital fluid or essence known as nectar. This transcendental fluid drips down into the individual consciousness from bindu. Bindu can be regarded in this context as the centre or passage through which the individuality emerges from cosmic consciousness in sahasrara.

This divine fluid has many different names. In English it can be termed ambrosia – the nectar of the gods. It is also known as amrit – the nectar of immortality. In the Vedas it is known as soma and in the tantras it is referred to as madya (divine wine). Many of the great Sufi poets refer to the sweet wine which brings instant intoxication. The same symbolism is contained in the Christian rituals where wine is consecrated and sacramentally imbibed. In fact, every religious system and mystical tradition concerned with awakening higher consciousness has its own symbolism for the unspeakable and indescribable feeling of bliss.

Between bindu and vishuddhi chakras there is another smaller psychic centre known as *lalana chakra* or *talumula*, and it is closely related to vishuddhi chakra. When the nectar trickles down from bindu it is stored in lalana. This centre is like a glandular reservoir, situated in the back of the nasopharynx, the inner cavity above and beyond the soft palate into which the nasal passages open. When you perform khechari mudra you are attempting to turn the tongue up and backwards into this cavity to stimulate the flow of nectar.

Although this fluid is known as ambrosia, it actually has a dual nature which can act as poison as well as nectar. When it is produced in bindu and stored in lalana, it remains undifferentiated, neither poison nor nectar. As long as vishuddhi chakra remains inactive, this fluid runs downward unimpeded, to be consumed in the fire of manipura, resulting in the processes of decay, degeneration and finally death in the body's tissues.

However, by certain practices such as khichari mudra, the ambrosia is secreted from lalana and passes to vishuddhi chakra, the purifying and refining centre. When vishuddhi is awakened, the divine fluid is retained and utilized, becoming the nectar of immortality. The secret of youth and regeneration of the body lies in the awakening of vishuddhi.

There is a wonderful story from the mythology of India which concerns the nectar and poison of vishuddhi. It is said that in the primordial past, the devas and the rakshasas, symbolizing the forces of good and evil, were continually fighting each other. Each was seeking to dominate and destroy the other. Eventually Vishnu attempted to resolve the conflict. He suggested they stir up the primordial ocean (representing the world and the mind), and said they could divide the contents equally between them.

This seemed a fair solution and Vishnu's plan was agreed upon. The ocean was churned and many things came to the surface for sharing and distribution between the devas and rakshasas. In all, fourteen things arose, including the nectar of immortality side by side with the worst poison. Of course, both the devas and the rakshasas wanted the nectar, but nobody wanted anything to do with the poison. Ultimately only the devas got the nectar, because if it had been given to the vicious rakshasas, they would have become immortal. The poison could not even be discarded, for wherever it was thrown it would cause harm. A great dilemma arose and eventually Vishnu took the poison to Shiva to ask his advice. Shiva swallowed the poison in a single gulp. From that time onwards, one of the names of Lord Shiva has been Nilakantha, the blue-throated one, and he is often depicted in this way.

This story signifies that even poison can be readily digested when vishuddhi chakra is awakened. It means that at higher levels of awareness, vishuddhi and above, even the poisonous and negative aspects of existence become integrated into the total scheme of being. They are rendered powerless, as concepts of good and bad fall away. At this state of awareness, the poisonous aspects and experiences of life are absorbed and transformed into a state of bliss.

In this chakra it is possible that not only internal poisons but also external poisons can be neutralized and rendered ineffective. This is one of the siddhis associated with vishuddhi chakra, and many yogis have possessed this power. It depends on the awakening of the throat centre and bindu in the brain, to which it is directly connected.

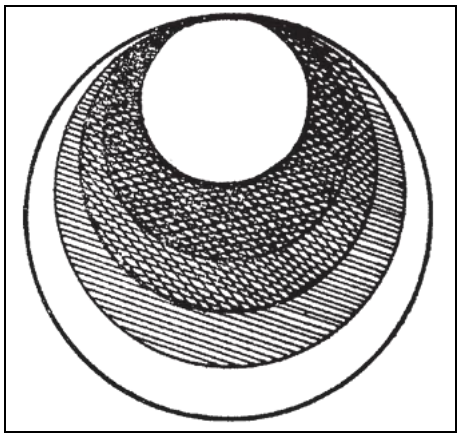
The potential of vishuddhi

Vishuddhi is the centre responsible for receiving thought vibrations from other people's minds. This actually occurs through a minor centre which is closely connected with vishuddhi. It acts somewhat like a transistor radio tuning into a radio station, allowing the yogi to tune into the thoughts and feelings of people both close by and far away. The thought waves of others are also experienced elsewhere in the body, in other centres such as manipura, but the actual reception centre of thought waves and transmissions is vishuddhi. From vishuddhi they are relayed to the centres in the brain associated with the other chakras, and in this way, they enter into the individual awareness.

Associated with vishuddhi is a particular nerve channel known as *Kurma Nadi*, the tortoise Nadi. When it is awakened, the practitioner is able to completely overcome the desire and necessity for food and drink. This

capability has been demonstrated by many yogis in the past.
Vishuddhi is actually the legendary 'fountain of youth'. It is said that when kundalini is in vishuddhi one enjoys eternal youth. When it awakens by the practices of hatha yoga, kundalini yoga or tantra, then a spontaneous physical rejuvenation begins to take place.
There is a point in life, usually in the second or third decade, when the rate of degeneration of the cells of the body surpasses the rate of regeneration. It is from that point that decay, old age, disease and death come to the fore in man's experience. In certain disease states such as some forms of leukaemia, the degenerative and destructive forces develop even more rapidly. The rejuvenation effected by vishuddhi chakra on the tissues, organs and systems of the body is in contradistinction to this ongoing ageing process, which is man's normal condition.
The powers attained through awakening vishuddhi include imperishability, full knowledge of the scriptures and also the knowledge of the past, present and future. The sense of hearing becomes very sharp, but through the mind and not the ears. One frequently experiences shoonyata, the void, and one overcomes all fear and attachment. One is then able to work freely in the world without being attached to the fruits of one's actions.

Bindu



Bindu, the source of creation, is beyond the realm of all conventional experience and, therefore, even in the tantric texts, there is very little written about it. It is the storehouse of all the karmas of man from his previous life. Not only are these karmas in the form of vasanas, they are also in the form of memories.
The word *bindu* means 'drop' or 'point'. It is more widely termed *bindu visarga*, which literally means 'falling of the drop'. Bindu is represented by the crescent moon and a white drop, which is the nectar dripping down to vishuddhi chakra. It is the ultimate source out of which all things manifest and into which all things return. In *Kama-Kala-Vilasa* (verses 6–9) it says, ". . . (bindu) is the cause of the creation of word and meaning, now entering and now separating from one another." ". . . from that (bindu) came ether, air, fire, water, earth and the letters of the alphabet."
Bindu is interconnected with vishuddhi chakra in the same way that the minor centres of the digestive system are connected with manipura, and those of the uro-genital and reproductive systems with swadhisthana and mooladhara chakras. Similarly, the minor centres of the respiratory and circulatory systems are integrated into anahata chakra and so on. In each case, the connection is mediated by the particular group of nerves associated with that chakra. Bindu and vishuddhi are connected via the network of nerves which flow through the interior portion of the nasal orifice, passing through lalana chakra, which is found at the uvula or palate. Therefore, when awakening takes place in vishuddhi, it simultaneously takes place in bindu and lalana.
The ten paired cranial nerves which emerge along the brain stem from their associated centres or nuclei are considered to actually have their initial origins within this tiny centre, so that the whole visual, nasal, auditory and tasting systems are ultimately manifestations from bindu.

The location point

The seat of bindu is at the top back of the head, exactly at the spot where Hindu brahmins leave a tuft of hair growing. Although this custom is still being followed today, its original purpose has been completely forgotten. In Sanskrit that tuft of hair is called *shikha*, which means 'the flame of fire'. Here, the word 'flame' stands for the flame of vasanas or the hidden karmas belonging to the previous life.
In the Vedic tradition, during *sandhya*, the hour of conjunction when the daily practices are performed by one who has undergone the thread ceremony and been initiated into mantra, a child was taught to practise with the tuft tied and tightened as much as possible. When the tuft was tightened and the child practised mantra, he developed a powerful and continuing awareness of this bindu point. He felt tightness rather than pain at that point. This is one traditional way of gaining contact with bindu.

Tantric physiology

According to tantric tradition, within the higher centres of the upper cortex of the brain there is a small depression or pit which contains a minute secretion. In the centre of that tiny secretion is a small elevation or point like an island in the middle of a lake. In the psychophysiological framework, this tiny point is considered to be bindu.
The actual isolation of such a miniscule structure within the anatomy of the brain has never been reported or

verified by medical scientists. However, such a study could prove both interesting and rewarding, in the same way that modern research into the mysterious pineal gland has verified that it is the anatomical and functional concomitant of ajna chakra, as described in the tantra shastras. However, it is easy to imagine that such a delicate and minute structure as the bindu would undoubtedly be disrupted during post mortem procedures. Certainly the tiny amount of fluid could hardly be expected to remain localized for easy extraction and analysis, when it is well known that other more plentiful neural and glandular transmitters and secretions degenerate and disperse into the tissues at the time of death. Nevertheless it is certainly a possibility to be considered.

Traditional symbology

In the tantric scriptures, the symbol of bindu is a crescent moon on a moonlit night. This symbol is very rich in meaning. The crescent moon indicates that bindu is closely related to the *kalas* (phases) of the moon, as are the endocrine, emotional and mental fluctuations of human beings. The immensity of sahasrara is gradually unveiled through ardent yoga practice in the same way that the full moon is progressively revealed from the time of the new moon to full moon each month. The background of the night sky also symbolizes the infinity of sahasrara beyond bindu. However, sahasrara cannot be fully experienced while individuality remains.

The symbol of *Om* æ also contains the representation of bindu in its uppermost part, which is a small point above a crescent moon. In fact, all the chakras are symbolized within the body of the Om symbol, as are the three gunas or qualities of the created world: tamas, rajas and sattwa. These chakras exist in the realm of prakriti and its gunas. In the Om symbol, bindu, however, is placed separately from the main body to indicate that it is transcendental and beyond the fetters of nature.

Bindu belongs to the seventh or highest loka of satyam, the plane of truth, and it also belongs to the causal body, or *anandamaya kosha*. It is said that when bindu awakens, the cosmic sound of Om is heard and one realizes the source of all creation, emanating from the bindu point and crescent moon above the symbol of Om.

The seat of nectar

In many of the tantric texts it is written that bindu, the moon, produces a very intoxicating secretion. Yogis can live on this ambrosial fluid. If its secretion is awakened and controlled in the body, then one needs nothing more for survival. The maintenance of the body's vitality becomes independent of food.

There have been many reports of people who have entered into states of hibernation or suspended animation underneath the earth. This phenomenon has been verified many times under strict scientific observation. This human hibernation has been witnessed for periods as long as forty days. Not all cases have been genuine, but when authentic, they have been carried out exactly in the following manner. Initially pranayama is practised assiduously, until kumbhaka (retention of the breath) has been perfected. At this stage, khechari mudra is performed. This is not the simple form of khechari as performed in kundalini yoga sadhana, but the practice from the hatha yoga tradition in which the root or frenulum of the under surface of the tongue is gradually cut and the tongue is slowly elongated and inserted into the nasopharynx. It blocks off the passage as a cork seals a bottle. The whole practice is perfected over a two year period.

By this practice, the drops from bindu fall to vishuddhi and subsequently permeate the whole bodily system. These drops of nectar maintain the nutrition and vitality of the bodily tissues while simultaneously arresting the metabolic processes of the body. When the metabolism of the cells and tissues of the body is suspended in this way, oxygen is no longer required and cellular wastes are not produced. Therefore, the person who hibernates can live without breathing for quite an extended period of time. Even the facial hair does not grow during the period of hibernation.

The poison centre

Besides producing nectar, bindu is responsible for the production of poison. The poison gland and the nectar glands are almost simultaneously situated. You may wonder if by awakening bindu there is any danger in stimulating the poison glands. If bindu and vishuddhi are stimulated at the same time, there is absolutely no danger, because bindu controls the nectar glands and vishuddhi has a bearing on both nectar and poison. As long as nectar is flowing, the poison can do no harm. Furthermore, if a yogi has purified his body through hatha yoga and the practices of dhyana and raja yoga, the poison glands are utilized for the production of nectar.

The origin of individuality

Bindu is considered to be the origin of creation or the point where oneness first divides itself to produce the world of multiple individual forms. This aspect of bindu can be traced to the Sanskrit root *bind*, which means 'to split' or 'divide'.

Bindu implies a point without dimension, a dimensionless centre. In some Sanskrit texts it is termed *chidghana*

– which has its roots in the limitless consciousness. Bindu is considered to be the gateway to *shoonya*, the state of void. This void should not be misinterpreted as a state of nothingness. Rather, it is the state of no-thingness – the state of pure, absolute and undifferentiated consciousness. Bindu is mysterious. It is an ineffable focal point within which the two opposites, infinity and zero, fullness and nothingness, coexist.

Within bindu is contained the evolutionary potential for all the myriad objects of the universe. Bindu contains the blueprint for creation. Evolution here refers to the vertical, transcendental process by which life, objects and organisms arise from the underlying substratum of existence. This evolution is not at all the same as the scientific concept of Darwinian evolution, which is but an historical trace of the changes over a period of time in the form, function or appearance of particular manifestations of individuality, such as the species of plants or animals. That evolution is an historical record over time, whereas the evolution and dissolution of consciousness into and out of individuality is in the realm of the timeless.

There is an individuating principle that generates the myriads of objects in the universe. In Sanskrit it is called *kala*, that which causes the potential inherent in the underlying consciousness to accumulate at bindu. From this point or seed an object, an animal, a human being or whatever can arise and manifest. Each and every object has a bindu as its base. This bindu lies within the *hiranyagarbha*, the golden egg or womb of creation. That which was previously formless assumes shape through the bindu, and its nature is fixed by the bindu as well. The bindu is both the means of expression of consciousness and also the means of limitation.

Some of the centres of manifestation from bindu possess consciousness, such as man. However, most centres are unconscious, such as the elements, stones, and so on. The potential to be conscious or unconscious depends only on the nature and structure of the individual object, and this is also determined by the bindu. Man has the apparatus that allows him to be a conscious centre.

Every object, conscious or unconscious, is linked to the underlying essence of consciousness through the intermediary of the bindu. Every object evolves into material existence through the medium of the bindu and every object is withdrawn back to the source via the bindu as well. Bindu is a trapdoor opening in both directions. It is the means through which conscious centres such as man can realize the totality of sahasrara.

There are essentially only two types of human beings: those who are on the *pravritti* path and those who are on the *nivritti* path. A man following the pravritti (outward) path looks away from bindu towards the outside world. He is almost entirely motivated by external events. This is the path of most people today and it leads away from self-knowledge and into bondage. The other path, the nivritti (reversed) path, is the spiritual path, the path of wisdom. On this path the individual begins to face the bindu, turning in towards the source of his being. This path leads to freedom. The path of evolution is the pravritti path of manifestation and extroversion. The path of involution leads back along the path that has produced your individual being. It leads back through the bindu to sahasrara. In fact, the whole purpose of yoga practice is to help direct your awareness along the involutionary path.

The power of the point

There is tremendous power ensheathed within the infinitesimal point. For example, one theory about the origin of the universe suggests that an infinitely dense point of matter exploded in a 'big bang' to form the entire cosmos. Similarly, research in subatomic physics has revealed that vast amounts of power are found concentrated within the multitudinous and different subatomic particles existing in the space/time continuum. Physics is now moving into the realms of the ineffable bindu.

In molecular biology, the essence of bindu can be found in the DNA and RNA molecules, each one of which contains the complete genetic blueprint for the entire organism. This is another illustration of the great intelligence and potential which can be condensed and expressed in the confines of a tiny point. In fact, the deeper science delves into nature and the structure of the universe, the greater the power and complexity it uncovers. Within the tiny dimensions of these points vast potentials of meaning are contained.

The power of the point or bindu has been known to mystics throughout the history of mankind. In tantra, each bindu, each particle of manifested existence is regarded as a centre of power or shakti. This shakti is an expression of the underlying substratum of static consciousness. The aim of the tantric system is to bring about a fusion of Shakti – the individual manifested power, with Shiva – the inert, underlying universal consciousness.

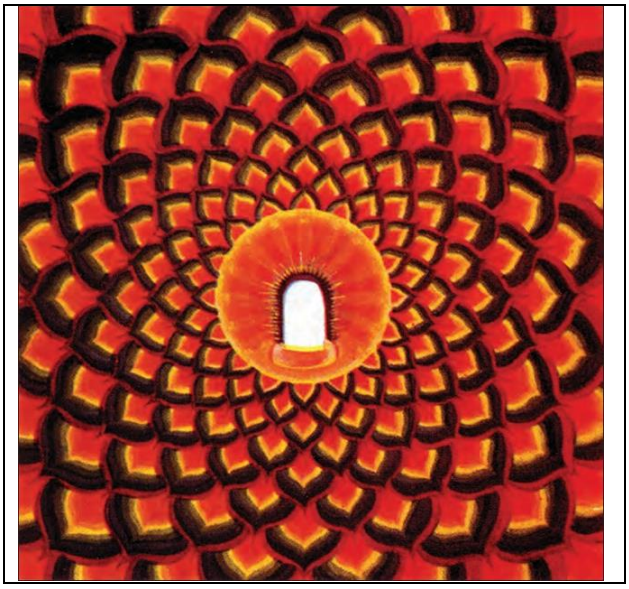
The red and white bindu

The bindu is the cosmic seed from which all things manifest and grow. It is often related to male sperm because from the tiny bindu of a single spermatozoon, joined with the minute female ovum, a new life grows. The act of conception is a perfect symbol of the principle of the bindu. In fact, bindu is explained in these terms in many of the texts of tantric kundalini yoga. In the *Yogachudamani Upanishad* (verse 60) it says: "The bindu is of two types, white and red. The white is *shukla* (sperm) and the red is *maharaj* (menses)."

Here the white bindu symbolizes Shiva, purusha or consciousness, and the red bindu symbolizes Shakti,

prakriti or the power of manifestation. The white bindu lies in the bindu visarga and the red bindu is seated in mooladhara chakra. The purpose of tantra and yoga is to unite these two principles so that Shiva and Shakti become one.
The text continues (verse 61): "The red bindu is established in the sun; the white bindu in the moon. Their union is difficult." The sun represents pingala nadi and the moon represents ida. The two bindus symbolize the merging of the world of opposites, in terms of male and female. Out of their union results the ascent of kundalini. Again the text continues (verse 63): "When the red bindu (Shakti) moves upwards (the ascent of kundalini) by control of prana, it mixes with the white bindu (Shiva) and one becomes divine."
All the systems of yoga control the prana in one way or another to bring about this union. In some cases it is through direct control, as in pranayama, while in other cases it is less direct. Nevertheless, the meeting of these two polarities, Shiva and Shakti, leads to superconsciousness. Verse 64 states: "He who realizes the essential oneness of the two bindus, when the red bindu merges with the white bindu, alone knows yoga."

Sahasrara and Samadhi



Sahasrara is not a chakra as is often thought. Chakras are within the realm of the psyche. Consciousness manifests at different levels according to the chakra that is predominantly active. Sahasrara acts through nothing and yet again, it acts through everything. Sahasrara is beyond the beyond (*parat-param*) and yet it is right here. Sahasrara is the culmination of the progressive ascension through the different chakras. It is the crown of expanded awareness. The power of the chakras does not reside in the chakras themselves, but in sahasrara. The chakras are only switches. All the potential lies in sahasrara.
The literal meaning of the word *sahasrara* is 'one thousand'. For this reason it is said to be a lotus with one thousand petals. However, while literally meaning one thousand, the word sahasrara implies that its magnitude and significance is vast – in fact, unlimited. Therefore, sahasrara should more aptly be described as a lotus with an infinite number of petals, usually said to be red or multicoloured.
Sahasrara is both formless (*nirakara*) and with form (*akara*), yet it is also beyond, and therefore untouched by form (*nirvikara*). It is shoonya, or in actual fact, the void of totality. It is Brahman. It is everything and nothing. Whatever we say about sahasrara will immediately limit and categorize it, even if we say it is infinite. It transcends logic, for logic compares one thing with another. Sahasrara is the totality, so what is there to compare it with? It transcends all concepts and yet it is the source of all concepts. It is the merging of consciousness and prana. Sahasrara is the culmination of yoga, the perfect merging.

Total union and the unfolding of enlightenment

When kundalini shakti reaches sahasrara, that is known as union between Shiva and Shakti, as sahasrara is said to be the abode of higher consciousness or Shiva. Union between Shiva and Shakti marks the beginning of a great experience. When this union takes place, the moment of self-realization or samadhi begins. At this point the individual dies. I do not mean that physical death occurs; it is death of the mundane awareness or individual awareness. It is death of the experience of name and form. At this time you do not remember the 'I', the 'you' or the 'they'. The experience, the experienced and the experiencer are one and the same. The seer, seeing and seen are merged as a unified whole. In other words, there is no multiple or dual awareness remaining. There is only single awareness.
When Shiva and Shakti unite, nothing remains, there is absolute silence. Shakti does not remain Shakti and Shiva is no more Shiva, both are mingled into one and they can no longer be identified as two different forces.
Every mystical and religious system of the world has its own way of describing this experience. Some have called it nirvana, others samadhi, kaivalya, self-realization, enlightenment, communion, heaven and so on. If you read the religious and mystical poems and scriptures of the many cultures and traditions, you will find ample descriptions of

sahasrara. However, you have to read them with a different state of consciousness to understand the esoteric symbology and terminology.

Raja yoga, kundalini and samadhi

In the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali you will not come across the word kundalini, as this text does not directly deal with kundalini yoga. However, not every saint, rishi or teacher has referred to kundalini by this name. Kundalini is the subject matter of tantra. When Patanjali wrote the *Yoga Sutras* 2,600 years ago, it was during the period of Buddha and about four centuries before the great era of philosophers. At that time, tantra had a very bad reputation in India because the gifts of kundalini, the siddhis, were being misused for petty purposes and people were being exploited. Therefore, tantra and tantric terminology had to be suppressed, and in order to keep the knowledge alive, an entirely different language had to be adopted.

In the raja yoga of Patanjali, emphasis is placed on the development of a state called samadhi. Samadhi actually means supermental awareness. First comes sensual awareness, then mental awareness, and above that is supermental awareness, the awareness of your own self. The awareness of forms, sound, touch, taste and smell is the awareness of the senses. The awareness of time, space and object is mental awareness. Supermental awareness is not a point; it is a process, a range of experience. Just as the term 'childhood' refers to a wide span of time, in the same way, samadhi is not a particular point of experience, but a sequence of experiences which graduate from one stage to another. Therefore, Patanjali classifies samadhi into three main categories. The first is known as *savikalpa* samadhi, that is, samadhi with fluctuation, and it has four stages: *vitarka, vichara, ananda* and *asmita*. The second category, *asamprajnata,* is samadhi without awareness, and the third category, *nirvikalpa*, is samadhi without any fluctuation. These names only indicate the particular state your mind is in during the samadhi experience. After all, the erosion in mental awareness does not take place suddenly; the normal mental awareness does not come to an abrupt end. There is development of one type of awareness and erosion of another. The normal consciousness fades and the higher awareness develops and, therefore, there is a parallel interaction between the two states.

Where does meditation end and where does samadhi begin? You cannot pinpoint it because there is an interspersion. Where does youth end and old age begin? The same answer applies, and the same process happens in samadhi as well. Where does savikalpa samadhi end and where does asamprajnata begin? The whole process occurs in continuity, each stage fusing into the next and transforming in a very graduated way. This seems logical when you consider that it is the same consciousness which is undergoing the experience.

In tantra it is said that when kundalini is ascending through the various chakras, the experiences one has may not be transcendental or divine in themselves, but they are indicative of the evolving nature of consciousness. This is the territory of savikalpa samadhi, sometimes illumined and sometimes dark and treacherous.

From mooladhara up to ajna chakra, the awareness is experiencing higher things, but it is not free from ego. You cannot transcend ego at the lower points of awakening. It is only when kundalini reaches ajna chakra that the transcendence begins. This is where the ego is exploded into a million fragments and the ensuing death experience occurs. At this point, savikalpa ends and nirvikalpa begins. From here, the energies fuse and flow together up to sahasrara, where enlightenment unfolds.

In tantra, sahasrara is the highest point of awareness, and in Patanjali's raja yoga, the highest point of awareness is nirvikalpa samadhi. Now, if you compare the descriptions of sahasrara and nirvikalpa samadhi, you will find that they are the same. And if you compare the experiences of samadhi described in raja yoga with the descriptions of kundalini awakening, you will find that they are also the same. It should also be noted that both systems talk about the same types of practices.

Raja yoga is more intellectual in its method of expression and is more in tune with philosophy, and tantra is more emotional in approach and expression. That is the only difference between the two paths. As far as I can understand, kundalini awakening and samadhi are the same thing. And if you can understand the teachings of Lord Buddha and the other great saints and spiritual teachers, you will find that they have also spoken about the same subject but in different languages.

Kundalini Yoga Practice
Rules and Preparation

Introduction

This section includes:

1. Preliminary techniques for individual chakras and kshetrams, and
2. Advanced techniques of kriya yoga.

The aspirant who earnestly wishes to follow the path of kundalini yoga has to approach life with a different attitude. His whole life must become a sadhana and he must be totally devoted to his practices and his goal. He will need to live a life of moderation and higher awareness in the midst of his daily responsibilities. He or she has to be a warrior in life and must seek the guidance of a competent guru who can point the way for the spiritual quest ahead. The kundalini yogi has to be ardent and faithful to his practice and his guru's instructions. He will need to devote more time each morning to perfect the practices given in this book.

Whatever your personal aim in life, and whatever your commitments and responsibilities, kundalini yoga can definitely help you to become more efficient, more peaceful and more aware. Seek the instructions of a sannyasin or a qualified yoga teacher, learn the techniques in this book, and practise them systematically according to the amount of time you are able to spare each day. In this way, your life will be transformed into the most exciting adventure ever – the journey to inner experience and unitive life.

The following rules and regulations apply to both the specific chakra practices and to the kriya yoga techniques. They should be followed as closely as possible.

Diet

Most people who are ready for kundalini yoga will be leading a well-regulated life and taking a balanced vegetarian diet. If you are still keeping late hours, drinking alcohol and eating large quantities of meat, we strongly suggest that you slowly reduce these and do some of the hatha yoga shatkarmas, such as *shankhaprakshalana*. In fact, we request you not to start the practices given in this book until you have become a pure vegetarian.

Eat vegetarian food that is fresh, clean and easily digestible, and eat in moderation. Kundalini yoga is a system which purifies the whole body; if there are excessive toxins in your body then there may be a drastic purging process. The consumption of too much food will also make it difficult to do most of the techniques properly, especially pranayama and those which involve uddiyana bandha.You should use your discrimination in choosing the food that you eat. Remember that all kundalini yoga courses given in our ashrams are accompanied by compulsory food restrictions, therefore, you should adopt similar restrictions. But please do not starve yourself or become a food faddist; only try to adopt sensible eating habits.

Illness

If you suffer from any physical illness, we advise you not to start the kundalini techniques given in this book. First of all, you should take steps to cure your illness by any suitable means, possibly hatha yoga. If necessary, write to this ashram, to any of our branch ashrams, or contact any competent yoga teacher for guidance. If you suffer from any serious mental or emotional problems, you should not, at present, start the practices of kundalini yoga. Practise other types of yoga to bring harmony into your life and mind, then start kundalini yoga. The kundalini techniques are very powerful, and if you do not have some degree of mental stability, they may worsen your condition. If in doubt, contact us. Sound health is the basic requirement for kundalini yoga practice.

Yogic preparation

Before commencing the kundalini techniques given in this book, you should have practised other systems of yoga, especially hatha and raja yoga, for at least a few years. In particular, you should be proficient in the following techniques: *pawanmuktasana* (anti-rheumatic and anti-gastric), *shakti bandha asanas, siddhasana* or *siddha yoni asana, surya namaskara*, major asanas such as *vipareeta karani asana, dhanurasana, shalabhasana*, *bhujangasana, matsyasana, paschimottanasana* and *ardha matsyendrasana*, as well as the shatkarmas, the basic practices of pranayama, such as *nadi shodhana*, and *nasikagra drishti, shambhavi mudra* and *maha bandha*.

All of these techniques are fully described in the Bihar School of Yoga publication *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha*. However, to master these techniques you will need to have the regular guidance of a qualified yoga teacher.

Time of practice

The best time of day to do your *sadhana* (practice) is, if possible, early in the morning, within the two hours before dawn. This is known as *brahmamuhurta* in Sanskrit, 'the time divine'. At this time spiritual energy is high and there are likely to be fewer disturbances, both external and internal, than at any other period of the day. However, if you are unable to practise during brahmamuhurta, choose some other time when the stomach is empty. Do the kundalini practices after other sadhana and before meditation practice.

Place of practice

Try to practise in the same place every day. This will gradually build up a positive atmosphere which will be helpful for your sadhana. Your place of practice should be clean, peaceful and well ventilated. It should be dry and neither too hot nor too cold. Do not practise on the bare floor; place a blanket or mat beneath you. If necessary, wrap a blanket or sheet around you. Try to avoid the use of fans, unless absolutely necessary.

Clothing

Clothing will depend on the prevailing climate, but it should be as light, loose and comfortable as possible.

Regularity

Try to practise daily at a fixed time, without fail, following the step-by-step program that we have given in this book. On certain days, the mind may give justification for not practising, or it may be upset, disturbed or restless. Providing there is no illness, you should endeavour to do your practice as normal.

Preliminary practices

Before starting the kundalini yoga practices, try to empty the bowels and take a cold shower. If you live in a cold climate, then at least wash the face with cold water. This is essential in order to remove sleepiness. It is a good idea to do a few asanas before commencing the kundalini practices. If time does not permit, then at least do five to ten rounds of *surya namaskara*, starting slowly and then accelerating the pace. This should be followed by a short period in *shavasana* until the breathing rate returns to normal.

Awareness

If the mind flits here and there like a wild monkey, do not worry. Let thoughts and emotions arise without suppression. Watch them with the attitude of a witness and continue your practice. Gradually the mind will become one-pointed. Whatever happens, your practice should continue. This attitude of witnessing the mind without interfering can be defined as awareness.

Posture

Most of the practices for specific chakras and the kundalini kriyas are done in a sitting position, or meditative asana. The best sitting asana is *siddhasana* (for males) and *siddha yoni asana* (for females). Not only do these two asanas apply direct pressure on mooladhara chakra, but this pressure, when applied correctly, brings about an awakening and redirection of nervous energy and blood circulation upwards from the pelvic and abdominal regions to the brain. This extra energy is important in kundalini sadhana, since it keeps the voltage of prana shakti at a high level. The perineal pressure awakens the source of energy and actively distributes prana upward to the higher centres.

Padmasana is also utilized for certain kundalini techniques such as *tadan kriya*. Though siddhasana is generally preferred in most of the other techniques, padmasana can also be used as an alternative. The disadvantage is that padmasana does not apply a direct pressure on mooladhara chakra.

Those who cannot sit comfortably in siddhasana can perform *utthanpadasana*, though it is difficult to maintain for an extended period of time. In the kriya yoga practices of *maha mudra* and *maha bheda mudra*, utthanpadasana can be performed instead of siddhasana, and is by tradition accepted as its equal.

Another asana, *bhadrasana*, also applies a good pressure on mooladhara chakra and can be substituted for siddhasana in many of the practices. It is also the required sitting position for *manduki mudra*, one of the techniques of kriya yoga.

In the descriptions of the kundalini practices, we have stated the best asana for each practice. You should only use one of the alternative asanas if the recommended asana is not suitable.

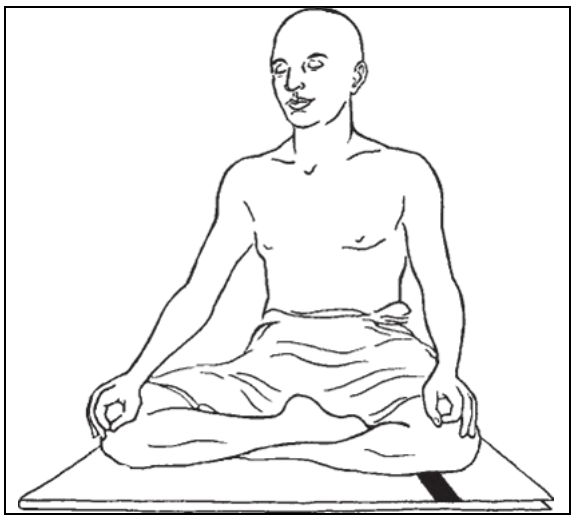
General practice note

If the hips, knees and ankles are not flexible enough to assume and maintain siddhasana, padmasana,

bhadrasana, etc., we suggest that you practise the pawanmuktasana series of exercises daily, especially *goolf naman, chakra* and *ghoornan* (ankle bending, rotation and crank), *janu chakra* (knee crank), *ardha* and *poorna titali asana* (half and full butterfly). *Kawa chalasana* (crow walking) and *utthanasana* (squat and rise pose) should also be practised. To improve the overall health of the body, other asanas can also be done, including surya namaskara.

Pranayama practices, such as *nadi shodhana*, should also be performed to develop control over inhalation, exhalation, and inner and outer retention, so necessary for perfecting many of the kundalini techniques. These practices can be done daily, side-by-side with the monthly practices that are given for the specific chakras.

Siddhasana (accomplished pose for men)



- Sit with the legs extended in front of the body.
- Bend the right leg and place the sole of the foot flat against the inner left thigh, with the heel pressing the perineum (the area of mooladhara chakra which is midway between the genitals and anus).
- This is an important aspect of siddhasana.
- Adjust the body until it is comfortable and the pressure of the heel is firmly applied.
- Bend the left leg and place the left ankle directly over the right ankle so that the anklebones are touching and the heels are one above the other.
- The left heel should press against the pubic bone directly above the genitals. The genitals will, therefore, lie between the two heels.
- Push the toes and outer edge of this foot into the space between the right calf and thigh muscles.
- If necessary, this space may be enlarged slightly by using the hands or temporarily adjusting the position of the right leg.
- Grasp the right toes, either from above or below the left calf and pull them upward into the space between the left thigh and calf.
- The legs should now be locked with the knees on the ground and the left heel directly above the right heel.
- Make the spine steady, straight and erect, as though it were planted in the ground.

Contra-indications: Siddhasana should not be practised by persons with sciatica or sacral infections.

Benefits: Siddhasana directs the energy from the lower psychic centres upward through the spine, stimulating the brain and calming the entire nervous system. The position of the lower foot at the perineum presses mooladhara chakra, stimulating moola bandha, and the pressure applied to the pubic bone presses the trigger point for swadhisthana, automatically activating vajroli/sahajoli mudra. These two psycho muscular locks redirect sexual nervous impulses back up the spinal cord to the brain, establishing control over the reproductive hormones which is necessary in order to maintain brahmacharya for spiritual purposes. Prolonged periods in siddhasana result in noticeable tingling sensations in the mooladhara region which may last for ten to fifteen minutes. This is caused by a reduction in the blood supply to the area and by a rebalancing of the pranic flow in the lower chakras. This posture redirects blood circulation to the lower spine and abdominal area.

Practice note: Siddhasana can be practised with either leg uppermost. Other classical asanas such as ardha padmasana and sukhasana can also be used, but not as effectively. Therefore, dedicate yourself initially to the perfection of siddhasana. In the beginning it is recommended that a folded blanket or small cushion be used to raise the buttocks slightly. This will enable you to rest the knees on the ground and to achieve a balanced posture. However, the blanket or cushion should not be too thick. Three or four centimetres in height should be enough. There must be a sustained but comfortable awareness of pressure on the perineal trigger point.

Siddha Yoni Asana
(accomplished pose for women)

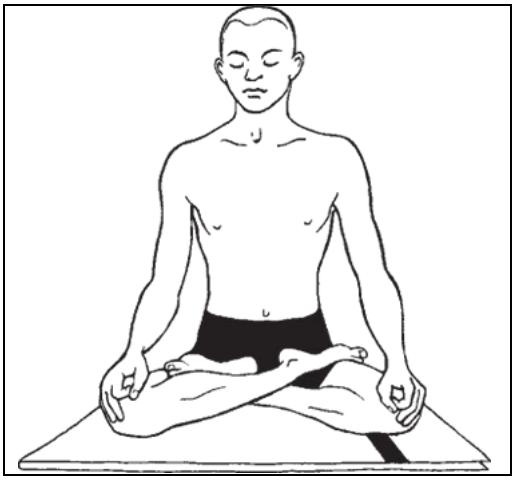
- Sit with the legs straight in front of the body.
- Bend the right leg and place the sole of the foot flat against the inner left thigh.
- Place this heel firmly against or inside the entrance of the vagina (labia majora).
- Adjust the body position so that it is as comfortable as possible while simultaneously feeling the pressure of the right heel.
- Bend the left leg and place the left heel directly on top of the right heel so it presses against the clitoris.
- Then wedge the left toes down into the space between the right calf and thigh so they touch, or almost touch, the floor.
- Pull the right toes up into the space between the left calf and thigh.
- Ensure that the knees are firmly on the ground.
- Make the spine fully erect and straight as though it were planted solidly in the earth.

Contra-indications: Siddhasana should not be practised by persons with sciatica or sacral infections.

Benefits: Siddhasana directs the energy from the lower psychic centres upward through the spine, stimulating the brain and calming the entire nervous system. The position of the lower foot at the perineum presses mooladhara chakra, stimulating moola bandha, and the pressure applied to the pubic bone presses the trigger point for swadhisthana, automatically activating vajroli/sahajoli mudra. These two psycho muscular locks redirect sexual nervous impulses back up the spinal cord to the brain, establishing control over the reproductive hormones which is necessary in order to maintain brahmacharya for spiritual purposes. Prolonged periods in siddhasana result in noticeable tingling sensations in the mooladhara region which may last for ten to fifteen minutes. This is caused by a reduction in the blood supply to the area and by a rebalancing of the pranic flow in the lower chakras. This posture redirects blood circulation to the lower spine and abdominal area.

Practice note: Siddhasana can be practised with either leg uppermost. Other classical asanas such as ardha padmasana and sukhasana can also be used, but not as effectively. Therefore, dedicate yourself initially to the perfection of siddhasana. In the beginning it is recommended that a folded blanket or small cushion be used to raise the buttocks slightly. This will enable you to rest the knees on the ground and to achieve a balanced posture. However, the blanket or cushion should not be too thick. Three or four centimetres in height should be enough. There must be a sustained but comfortable awareness of pressure on the perineal trigger point.

Padmasana (lotus pose)

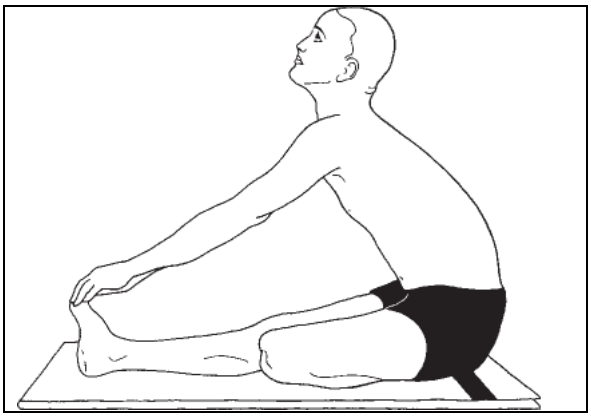


- Sit with the legs extended in front of the body.
- Bend one leg and place its foot on top of the opposite thigh.
- The sole of the foot must be upward, with the heel facing or touching the pelvis.
- Bend the other leg and place its foot on top of the other thigh.
- The spine should be held straight, the neck, head and shoulders should be relaxed and the body should be steady.

Contra-indications: Those who suffer from sciatica, sacral infections or weak or injured knees should not perform this asana. This asana should not be attempted until flexibility of the knees has been developed.

Benefits: Padmasana allows the body to be held completely steady for long periods of time. It holds the trunk and head like a pillar with the legs as the firm foundation. As the body is steadied the mind becomes calm. This steadiness and calmness is the first step towards real meditation. Padmasana directs the flow of prana from mooladhara chakra in the perineum, to sahasrara chakra in the head, heightening the experience of meditation.
This posture applies pressure to the lower spine which has a relaxing effect on the nervous system. The breath becomes slow, muscular tension is decreased and blood pressure is reduced.
The coccygeal and sacral nerves are toned as the normally large blood flow to the legs is redirected towards the abdominal region. This activity also stimulates the digestive process.

Utthanpadasana (stretched leg pose)



- Sit with both legs extended in front of the body.
- Bend the left knee and press the left heel firmly into the perineum or the entrance to the vagina, the location point of mooladhara chakra.
- The right leg remains outstretched.
- Place both hands on the right knee.
- Adjust the position so that it is comfortable.
- Bend forward just enough to be able to clasp the right big toe with both hands.
- Hold the position for a comfortable duration.
- Return to the upright position with both hands resting on the right knee.

Bhadrasana (gracious pose)

- Sit in vajrasana.
- Separate the knees as far as possible, while keeping the toes in contact with the floor.
- Separate the feet just enough to allow the buttocks and perineum to rest flat on the floor between the feet.
- Try to separate the knees further but do not strain.
- Place the hands on the knees, palms down, and make the back straight.

Chakra Sadhana Course

Month by month we have given specific practices for the awakening of each chakra, one after the other. These practices must be adopted systematically. For the first month, you should only perform the techniques for ajna chakra. Then in the second month, add those for mooladhara. In the third month, add those for swadhisthana. In the fourth month, do those practices for manipura and selected practices for ajna, mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras. (By this stage, due to the number of practices, it will be necessary to omit some.) In this way, you should continue, adding the practices for each chakra, until you reach bindu during the seventh month.

The first month is concerned with awakening ajna chakra and not the lowest one, mooladhara, which is treated in the second month. It may seem more logical and consistent to start with mooladhara practices, but it is a rule of kundalini yoga that there should be awakening of ajna chakra first. Unless this is achieved, then the awakening of the lower chakras may rock the stability of the practitioner; one may experience physical, mental and emotional shocks which one cannot bear. The awakening of ajna chakra brings a great degree of detachment, which allows one to withstand the lower chakra awakenings without excessive shock. One is able to observe chakra experiences with the attitude of a witness. This is most essential in kundalini yoga. In the eighth month we have given some practices which influence the chakras as a whole. These should also be done for one month.

Please note that some practices influence more than one chakra, but we have only given each practice once as sadhana for the chakra it is most likely to affect. Also, it should be noted that nothing can be gained by randomly selecting one chakra sadhana program and just practising it for a day or two and then commencing another practice. As each practice is a stepping-stone for another practice, the techniques should be performed systematically. In each chapter, practices are given to locate the position of the *chakra*, and its counterpart, the *kshetram* (which is located in the front of the body). It is important that you can locate these points exactly.

The practices given for each chakra are the building blocks from which the kriya yoga techniques are constructed. As such, you should perfect them before proceeding to the kriyas. Ultimately, you will only need to practise the kriyas, but prior to this you must devote at least one hour a day to the chakra practices for the next eight months.

Kriya yoga

In chapter 38 we have given a full description of the twenty kundalini kriyas, which are widely known as kriya yoga. At this stage, you can leave all the specific practices given in the previous chapters for awakening the chakras individually, or if you wish you can select a few to continue with.

The kundalini kriyas can be learned and practised one after the other, at the rate of one per week. That is, in the first week perfect vipareeta karani mudra; in the second week add chakra anusandhana; then add nada sanchalana in the third week, and so on. At the end of twenty weeks you should be doing the entire series of twenty kriyas daily, with the traditional number of rounds for each kriya, or with a reduced number of rounds as indicated.
Please note that the kundalini kriyas should only be practised under the guidance of a qualified teacher.

Practices for Ajna Chakra

MONTH 1

Direct concentration on ajna chakra is very difficult and, for this reason, in tantra and yoga the mid eyebrow centre (which in fact is the kshetram of ajna) is used to awaken this chakra. This point is called bhrumadhya (*bhru* means eyebrow and *madhya* means centre), and it lies between the two eyebrows in the place where Indian ladies put a red dot, and pandits and brahmins put a mark of sandal paste. This eyebrow centre can be stimulated and awakened by various techniques.
Firstly, there is an important shatkriya (cleansing technique) called *trataka*, which will aid in the awakening of ajna. It is a powerful technique which can be defined as 'fixed gazing at one point'. If practised regularly, it develops the power of concentration and from this concentration, the direct awakening of the latent faculties of ajna chakra is brought about.
Ajna can also be stimulated and awakened by concentration on the nadis directly. The method for this is *anuloma viloma pranayama*, mental or psychic nadi shodhana, also known as 'the coming and going pranayama', and *prana shuddhi*, 'the purifying breath'.
You can also awaken ajna chakra by concentrating on the eyebrow centre, performing such practices as *shambhavi mudra*. Initially, when there is no sensation or awareness at this point, some ointment or oil such as tiger balm can be applied. This facilitates concentration. With practise, the pressure of your concentration at this area increases and the sensations are carried back to the pineal gland. This brings about an awakening in the pineal gland in the form of visions and internal experiences.
Ajna and mooladhara chakras are closely related, and the awakening of one helps to awaken the other. Ideally, ajna should be awakened to some extent before mooladhara, in order to allow an unaffected perception of the energies manifested by mooladhara and the lower chakras. However, the awakening of mooladhara will help to further awaken ajna. In fact, the best way to bring about awakening of ajna is through the practices of *moola bandha* and *ashwini mudra*, which are specific for mooladhara.

Preparatory practices

Jala and *sutra neti* can be practised for a few months to purify the nasal area and the important nerve junction behind it. This will help to sensitize ajna chakra and aid in its awakening. Apart from having a profound effect on the nervous system, neti removes dirt and mucus from the nasal passages, relieving colds and sinusitis, disorders of the eyes, ears, nose and throat, as well as inflammation of the tonsils, adenoids and mucous membranes. It removes drowsiness and gives a general lightness and freshness in the head and throughout the body. At the same time, it profoundly alters psychic awareness, facilitating free flow of breath in both nostrils, so that the meditative state can be attained. It should be practised every morning before you commence your other sadhana. For complete details refer to the Bihar School of Yoga publication *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha*.

Practice program

The following sadhana (consisting of practices 1, 2 and 3) for ajna chakra should be continued daily for one month. You may then proceed to the sadhana given for awakening mooladhara chakra.

Practice 1:

Anuloma Viloma Pranayama with Prana Shuddhi
(the coming and going breath and the purifying breath)

- Sit in a comfortable meditative posture.
- Make sure the spine is erect and the body is relaxed.
- The body must become absolutely still.
- After some minutes, begin to develop awareness of the breath in the nostrils.
- When you breathe in, your whole awareness should flow with the breath from the tip of the nose, up to the eyebrow centre.
- When you breathe out, your whole awareness should flow with the breath from the eyebrow centre to the tip of the nose.
- Become aware of the triangular form of the breath between the nostrils and the eyebrow centre.
- The base of the triangle is at the level of the upper lip, its sides are the right and left nasal passages, and its apex is within the eyebrow centre.
- Firstly, feel the breath moving in and out of the left nostril, then the right nostril.
- Then be aware of the breath as it flows in and out through both nostrils together.
- Once you are established in this breath awareness, begin to consciously alternate the flow of the breath between the two nostrils in the same way as nadi shodhana, except you practise it psychically or mentally.
- Consciously inhale through the left nostril to bhrumadhya and exhale through the right, then inhale through the right to bhrumadhya, and exhale through the left.
- This is one round of anuloma viloma or mental nadi shodhana.
- Complete 4 rounds.

Now practise one round of prana shuddhi, which involves breathing in and out through both nostrils together.

Inhale and exhale through both nostrils simultaneously, visualizing the passage of the breath forming an inverted V-shape.

Continue in this way: four alternate nostril breaths, then one breath through both nostrils.

In the beginning, the rounds can be counted as follows:

1 – inhale left nostril, exhale right nostril; inhale right nostril, exhale left nostril, 2 – repeat, 3 – repeat, 4 – repeat, 5 – inhale both nostrils, exhale both nostrils, and so on.

After some practise, the rounds can be counted from 100 back to zero as follows:

100 – inhale left nostril, exhale right nostril; inhale right nostril, exhale left nostril, 99 – repeat, 98 – repeat, 97 – repeat, 96 – inhale both nostrils, exhale both nostrils, and so on.

Practice note: Accuracy in the counting is absolutely necessary, and if an error is made, the practice must recommence from 100. It is very important to keep count of the breaths, because without keeping count, anuloma viloma is altogether too powerful for many aspirants, swallowing up their awareness in the unconscious sphere. The aim of the practice is to stimulate ajna chakra on the subconscious, psychic level, and for this, awareness must be maintained.

If you sink into the unconscious sphere, you will only be aware of the vast store of impressions in the unconscious mind, and will completely lose awareness of the practice. This awareness is essential for the development of mind control and also for the awakening of ajna chakra to conscious accessibility. This practice can also be very well integrated into yoga nidra. (See chapter 35.)

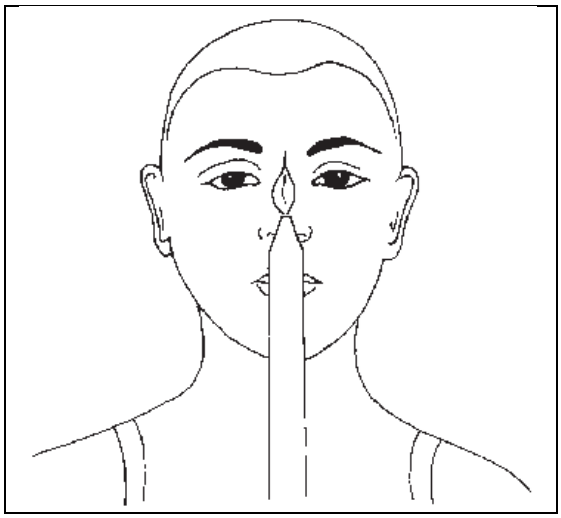
Practice 2:

Trataka (concentrated gazing)

- Sit in a comfortable meditative asana, in a dark room in which there is no draught or breeze.
- Place a lighted candle at eye level, directly in front of the eyebrow centre, at arm's length.
- Make sure that the wick is perfectly straight and that the flame is motionless.
- Straighten the spine, close the eyes and relax the body.

Be aware of the physical body only. Let it become as still as a statue.

From this time on you should try to keep the body absolutely motionless throughout the whole practice.



When you are prepared, open your eyes and gaze steadily at the tip of the wick. With practise you should be able to gaze steadily at the flame without blinking or moving the eyeballs. Two to three minutes is sufficient.
The whole of your consciousness must become centred in the flame, to the extent that awareness of the rest of the body and the room is lost. The gaze should be absolutely fixed at the tip of the wick. When the eyes become tired or if they begin to water, close them and relax.
Do not move the body, but be aware of the after-image of the flame in front of the closed eyes.
Everyone has looked into the sun or a bright light, and on closing the eyes for a few minutes, has seen the clear impression of that light on the retina of the eye. Likewise, the after-image of the candle flame will be clearly visible.
You should practise trataka on this image, holding it directly in front or a little above the eyebrow centre. Keep the eyes closed. If the image moves up or down, or from side to side, observe it and try to stabilize it, without straining.
When you are sure the image has appeared and faded for the last time, then open the eyes and continue to concentrate on the external candle flame.
After the last round, gaze into the emptiness for a few seconds then practise palming.

Time of practice: The best times to practise trataka are the dark hours of the very early morning or late at night. At these times, the atmosphere becomes very still and quiet, not only the physical atmosphere, but also the mental and psychic atmospheres. In this stillness, success in trataka is readily attained.

Duration: Trataka can be practised as time permits, but five to fifteen minutes is the usual period in the beginning, building up to thirty minutes gradually over a period of time. Two to three minutes per round is sufficient to spend gazing at the flame.

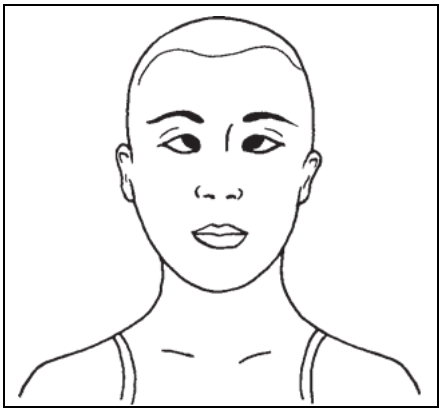
Contra-indications: Trataka on a flame is not recommended for myopia, astigmatism, cataract or glaucoma.

Benefits: Trataka has many physical, mental and spiritual benefits. Physically, it corrects eye weaknesses and defects such as nearsightedness. Mentally, it increases nervous stability, removes insomnia and relaxes the anxious mind. When the eyes are fixed and unmoving, the mind becomes steady and calm. It helps to develop good concentration and strong willpower. Spiritually it awakens ajna chakra.

Variations: Trataka can be practised on a small dot, the full moon, the rising sun, a shadow, a crystal ball, the nose tip, an image in water, a yantra, darkness, a shivalingam and many other things. Those who have a personal deity can practise trataka on his or her form and those who have a guru can practise on his or her photograph. Trataka can also be practised on one's own image in the mirror, or the eyes of another person. These should, however, only be done under the guidance of a guru, as there are certain risks involved.
Avoid practising trataka on the sun as the delicate membranes of the eyes may be damaged.
There are two divisions of trataka, *bahiranga* (outer) and *antaranga* (inner). The methods mentioned so far are all part of bahiranga trataka. Inner trataka (antaranga) is internal visualization, perhaps of a chakra, a yantra or your personal deity. The eyes remain closed throughout. One of the best inner objects for concentration is a tiny star or point of light.

Practice 3:

Shambhavi Mudra (eyebrow centre gazing) with Om chanting



Stage 1: External awareness

- Sit in any meditative pose with the back straight and hands on the knees.
- Look forward at a fixed point, then look upward as high as possible without moving the head.
- Focus the eyes and concentrate on the eyebrow centre.
- Try to suspend the thought processes and meditate on ajna.
- Repeat Om, Om, Om with awareness of the sound vibrations at the eyebrow centre into which you are gazing.
- Each Om should be produced in a soft clear voice, with awareness of every vibration of the mantra in the eyebrow centre.
- Each mantra should be one or two seconds in duration, and immediately followed by the next.

- Practise for three to five minutes.

Stage 2: Internal awareness

- Now the eyes are closed, but the inner gaze remains in the eyebrow centre.
- Begin to chant the mantra more slowly, with full awareness of the sound vibration in the eyebrow centre.
- Imagine that the sound is being emitted from within the eyebrow centre itself.
- Gradually and effortlessly increase the duration of each Om, making it long and continuous.
- The sound should be steady and of an even key, ending on completion of the breath.
- Then refill the lungs completely by breathing through the nose, but do not alter the position of the body or head.
- Begin the next Om, maintaining awareness of the sound emerging from the eyebrow centre.
- Practise for five minutes.

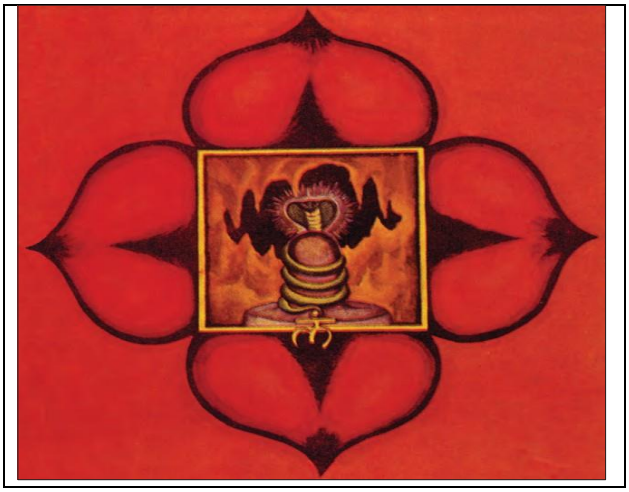
Stage 3: Awareness of sound vibration

- Continue to chant the mantra Om, but become aware of the sound reverberating throughout the body.
- Try to be aware of the sound only, listening to its vibration emanating from the eyebrow centre and permeating the whole body.
- Do not be self-conscious, but allow the sound to manifest itself fully, maintaining awareness of the vibration of the sound only.
- Practise for five minutes.
- Gradually the duration of the practice can be lengthened.
- Finish off the practice with palming.

Precautions: Do not strain the eye muscles; when they become tired or slightly strained, release shambhavi mudra and relax the eyes.

Practices for Mooladhara Chakra

MONTH 2



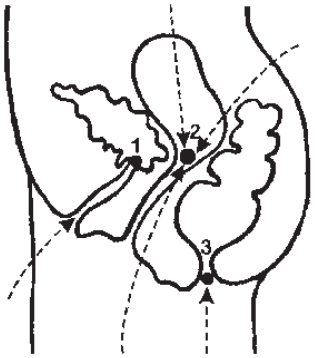
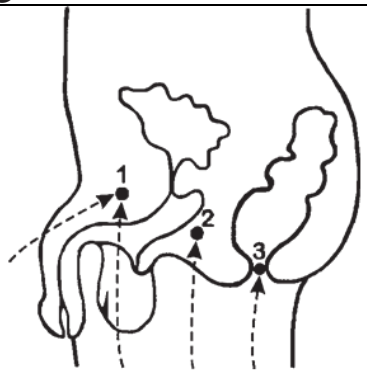
The process of awakening mooladhara chakra is not very difficult. It can be achieved by thousands of different methods, but the easiest of all is the concentration on the tip of the nose. This is because the part of the sensory cortex which represents mooladhara chakra is connected with the nose. At the same time, mooladhara chakra belongs to the earth element, which is directly related to the sense of smell. Therefore, we shall include *nasikagra drishti*, the practice of nose tip gazing, in this section, as well as moola bandha, which directly stimulates mooladhara chakra. Remember that mooladhara chakra does not have a kshetram.

Practice program

This sadhana (practices 1, 2 and 3) for mooladhara chakra should be done for a period of one month. You should also continue the practices for awakening ajna chakra.

Difference between moola bandha, vajroli/sahajoli mudra and ashwini mudra

Often there is confusion between the three practices of moola bandha (used for awakening mooladhara chakra) and vajroli/sahajoli mudra and ashwini mudra (both used for awakening swadhisthana chakra). The following diagrams for both male and female locations will help to clarify the difference in the points of contraction.

Diagram 1: for the female	Diagram 2: for the male
	
Key to location of contraction points: (1) Sahajoli mudra (clitoris, vaginal walls and urethra). (2) Moola bandha (cervix and vaginal muscles) (3) Ashwini mudra (anal muscles/sphincters).	Key to location of contraction points: (1) Vajroli mudra (penis) (2) Moola bandha (between anus and scrotum; the perineal body) (3) Ashwini mudra (anal muscles/sphincters).

Practice 1:

Mooladhara chakra location

For women:	For men:
• Sit in siddha yoni asana or a suitable alternative. • Relax the body completely and close the eyes. • Move the awareness to the lower part of the body and focus the attention on the contact point between the heel and the opening of the vagina. • Become intensely aware of the slight but distinct pressure. • Centre yourself at the pressure point. • Now become aware of the natural breath. • Feel or imagine that you are breathing in and out of the pressure point. • Continue for 10 deep breaths. • Now bring your awareness inside the body. • From the point of external pressure, move your awareness in towards the base of the spine. • Follow the natural formation of the vagina, moving up at a slight angle and back towards the spine until you come to the opening of the womb. • You are at the opening of the womb, about two or three centimetres inside the body, just below the base of the spine. • Focus your awareness at this point and begin to breathe in and out from the cervix to the point of outer pressure. • Breathe in and bring your awareness to the opening of the womb. • Breathe out and move again to the outer pressure point, the opening of the vagina. • Somewhere in this area you will find your point for mooladhara chakra. • Feel this point clearly and distinctly and mentally repeat, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'. • Maintain unbroken awareness of this point for up to five minutes.	• Sit in siddhasana or any asana in which the heel is pressed into the perineum. • Close the eyes, relax completely and become aware of the whole physical body. • Move the awareness to the point of contact between the heel and perineum, midway between the testes and the anus. • Become intensely aware of the distinct pressure exerted on the perineal body. • Centre yourself at the pressure point. • Now become aware of the breath. • Feel or imagine that you are breathing in and out of this pressure point. • Feel the breath moving through the perineal body, becoming finer and finer, and finer, so that it pierces the point where mooladhara chakra is located. • You will feel it as a psychophysical contraction. • Say mentally, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'. • Maintain awareness of the perineal body and the breath for up to five minutes.

Alternative practice: Locating mooladhara chakra by touch

For women:	For men:
• Assume a comfortable sitting or lying position and gently insert one finger into the vagina as far as it will go. • Then contract the vaginal muscles inwards and upwards so that the walls of the upper vagina contract, and squeeze the finger. • If you can do this without contracting the anus or the front part of the perineum (clitoris and urinary opening), the location of mooladhara chakra is correct.	• Sit in a comfortable position and press one finger onto the perineum, midway between the anus and scrotum, then contract the muscles there. • The contraction will be felt. • When you can contract those muscles without movement of the anus or penis, the perineal body has been successfully isolated.

Practice 2:

Moola Bandha (perineal contraction)

Stage 1: Contraction with breath retention

- Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or any other posture which will apply a firm pressure in the region of mooladhara chakra.
- Close the eyes and relax the whole body.
- Inhale deeply.
- Hold the breath and contract the muscles at the mooladhara chakra region.
- Draw the muscles upwards as much as you are able without excessive strain.
- Try to contract only the mooladhara chakra trigger point, so that the urinary musculature in front and the anal sphincters behind, remain relaxed.
- Keep your attention fixed on the exact point of contraction.
- Hold this contraction for as long as possible.
- Then release moola bandha and breathe normally. Practise for a few minutes daily.

Practice note: Jalandhara bandha (described in chapter 33 of this section), can also be added to the practice. With breath retention, perform jalandhara bandha, followed by moola bandha. Before exhaling, release moola bandha, then jalandhara bandha.

Stage 2: Physical contraction

- Contract and release moola bandha rhythmically.
- About one contraction per second is reasonable, or if you wish, you can synchronize the contraction with the heartbeat.
- Again, ensure that the contraction is focused at the exact trigger point and at the anus.
- Direct all your attention to the point of contraction.
- Practise for a few minutes daily.

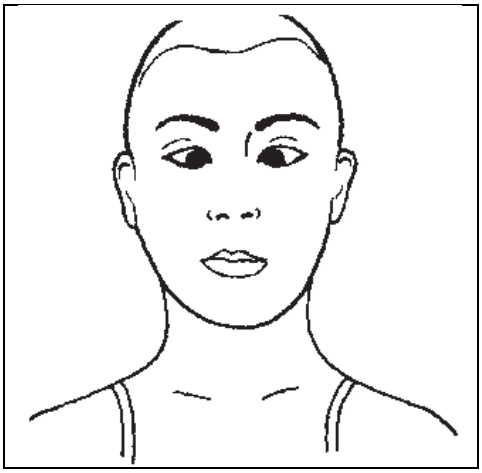
Stage 3: Mental contraction

- Leave all physical contraction.
- Try to feel the pulse beat at the trigger point, or try to contract the point mentally.
- Direct all your attention to the mooladhara chakra area.
- The practice is similar to stage 2, without the physical contraction.
- Continue for as long as you have time to spare.
- With practise, you will be able to locate the trigger point of mooladhara chakra exactly, merely through thought alone.

Practice 3: Nasikagra Drishti (nose tip gazing)

- Sit in any meditative pose with the spine erect and the head upright.
- Close the eyes and relax the whole body for some time.
- Then open the eyes and focus them on the nose tip.
- Do not strain the eyes, but try to fix the gaze on the tip of the nose.
- Respiration should be normal.
- When the eyes are correctly focused, a double outline of the nose is seen.
- These two lines converge at the tip of the nose, forming an inverted V-image.
- Concentrate on the apex of the V.
- If you do not see a solid V-shaped outline, then both eyes are not fixed on the nose tip.
- It is then necessary to focus the eyes on the finger tip, 25 centimetres in front of the face, and hold the

fingertip in focus as you slowly bring it to the nose tip.



- Eventually, you can discard this method and easily focus the eyes on the nose tip at will.
- At first you may find it difficult to hold your attention on the nose tip for more than a few seconds.
- When you feel discomfort, release the position of the eyes for a few seconds and then repeat the practice.
- Over a period of weeks, as the eyes become accustomed, gradually increase the duration of the practice.
- Never strain the eyes.
- Once you can comfortably maintain a steady gaze for a minute or more, become aware of your breath as well as the nose tip.
- Feel the breath moving in and out through the nose.
- At the same time, become aware of the subtle sound the breath makes as it moves through the nasal passages.
- Try to become completely absorbed in the practice, to the exclusion of all other thoughts and external distractions.
- Be aware of the nose tip, the movement of the breath and the accompanying sound.
- Continue in this manner for up to five minutes.
- End the practice with palming to relax and energize the eyes.

Practice note: *This practice is also called* agochari mudra *(the gesture of invisibility).*

Practices for Swadhisthana Chakra

MONTH 3

The sadhana for awakening swadhisthana chakra is solely concerned with the uro-genital systems, the prostate gland and testes in the male, and the genito-ovarian system in the female. Vajroli and sahajoli mudras are two very powerful practices which rechannel sexual energy and help bring about the awakening of swadhisthana. Vajroli is practised by males and sahajoli by females. There are simple forms of vajroli and also more difficult techniques which require the direct guidance of a guru. However, the practices given here can be performed with reasonable ease by anyone who is thoroughly familiar with shalabhasana, dhanurasana and uddiyana bandha. Refer to 'Difference between moola bandha, vajroli and ashwini mudras', given in chapter 29.

Preparatory practices

A large number of asanas have a direct effect on swadhisthana chakra and help to bring about initial purification and sensitization. We suggest that you practise shakti bandha series, bhujangasana, shashankasana, dhanurasana and shashank bhujangasana.

Practice program

The sadhana (practices 1–4) for awakening swadhisthana chakra, should be perfected over a period of one month. It should be kept in mind that swadhisthana is the switch for bindu and, therefore, the sadhana for swadhisthana also brings about a simultaneous effect on and awakening of bindu. You can also continue the sadhana for ajna and mooladhara chakras.

Practice 1: Swadhisthana chakra location

- Sit in a comfortable position.
- Move one finger to the lowest end of the spine and feel the coccyx, the tailbone.
- Then move the finger up about one inch or 2–3 centimetres, along the sacral portion of the pelvis, and press hard for one minute.
- When you take the finger away, you will experience a residual sensation.

- About one centimetre deep into that sensation is the location of swadhisthana chakra.
- Concentrate on it for two minutes or so repeating mentally, 'swadhisthana, swadhisthana, swadhisthana'.

Practice 2: Swadhisthana kshetram location

- If you feel down to the lower end of the abdomen, you will come to a bony portion at the front part of the pelvis.
- This is called the pubis, and is the anatomical location of swadhisthana kshetram.
- Press hard on this area for about one minute.
- Then remove the finger and concentrate on the point where your finger was.
- Repeat mentally, 'swadhisthana, swadhisthana, swadhisthana'.

Practice 3: Ashwini Mudra (horse gesture)

- Sit in any meditative posture.
- Relax the whole body, close the eyes and breathe normally.
- Contract the sphincter muscles of the anus for half a second, then relax them for half a second.
- Continue this contraction and relaxation for a few minutes.
- Try to feel the waves spreading up to hit swadhisthana chakra.
- Focus your whole attention on the lower end of the spine and feel the pressure waves.

Practice 4:

Sahajoli Mudra (spontaneous psychic attitude)	Vajroli Mudra (thunderbolt attitude)
for women:	**for men:**
• Sit comfortably in siddha yoni asana, preferably with a thin cushion or folded blanket beneath the buttocks. • Close the eyes and relax the body. • Contract the urethra. • This contraction is similar to that made when trying to control the urge to urinate. • The vaginal muscles and the hood of the clitoris may move slightly due to this contraction. • Gradually increase the contraction until it becomes more intense and deeper. • Hold the contraction for 10 seconds, release for 10 seconds. • Continue for a few minutes, mentally repeating 'swadhisthana, swadhisthana, swadhisthana'.	• Sit comfortably in siddhasana, preferably with a thin cushion or a folded blanket beneath the buttocks. • Close the eyes and relax the body. • Take the awareness to the urethra, the urinary passage within the penis. • Try to draw the urethra upward. • This muscular action is similar to that made when trying to control the urge to urinate. • The testes may move slightly due to this contraction. • Try to focus and confine the force of the contraction at the urethra. • Try not to perform moola bandha or ashwini mudra at the same time. • Contract for 10 seconds, release for 10 seconds. • Continue this for a few minutes. • Concentrate on the kshetram at the pubis all the time, while repeating mentally, 'swadhisthana, swadhisthana, swadhisthana'.

Practices for Manipura Chakra

MONTH 4

There are several methods of awakening manipura chakra. According to hatha yoga, manipura is directly connected with the eyes. Ajna chakra and manipura chakra are very closely related to one another in the same way that vision and wilful action are interdependent processes. Therefore, the practice of trataka brings about manipura and ajna chakra awakening.

Although tantra is not against any particular diet, when manipura chakra is to be awakened, the diet has to be very pure, and at certain stages, fasting may be necessary as well. If manipura is awakened when the diet is faulty, harmful reactions may take place. Because manipura is the centre of the digestive fire, disorders of the gastrointestinal system are corrected by manipura sadhana.

The major constituents of manipura sadhana are uddiyana bandha and nauli kriya. Uddiyana bandha is the contraction of the abdomen and the control of the muscles of the abdominal wall, as well as control over the small and large intestines and the other digestive and visceral organs. The functions of the liver, gallbladder, spleen,

pancreas and stomach are brought into harmonious and controlled interaction when uddiyana bandha is perfected. However, agnisar kriya must be mastered before uddiyana is attempted.

Nauli kriya is the control of the rectus abdomini muscles and churning of the whole abdomen. This is a difficult practice which takes some time to perfect. However, with mastery of nauli, it is easy to create a union of prana and apana in the navel, so manipura chakra can be awakened.

Preparatory practices

The following asanas will be found useful in awakening manipura chakra: pawanmuktasana (the anti-gastric series), chakrasana, dhanurasana, marjari-asana, matsyasana, yoga mudra, paschimottanasana and ushtrasana.

Practice program

Practise the techniques for awakening manipura chakra for one month and then proceed to those for anahata chakra. Nauli may be difficult for many people; do not strain or overexert. It is best not to attempt it until you have mastered agnisar kriya and uddiyana bandha.

The practices for awakening ajna, mooladhara and swadhisthana can also be continued.

Practice 1: Manipura chakra and kshetram location

- Stand sideways in front of a mirror.
- Put one finger of one hand on the navel and one finger of the other hand on the spine, directly behind.
- Sit down, press firmly with the finger on the spine for one minute, then remove the finger.
- As the pressure sensation continues, concentrate on the area slightly deeper in from that point.
- This is the location of manipura chakra.
- Whilst feeling the pulse beat at this point, mentally repeat the mantra, 'manipura' for a few minutes.

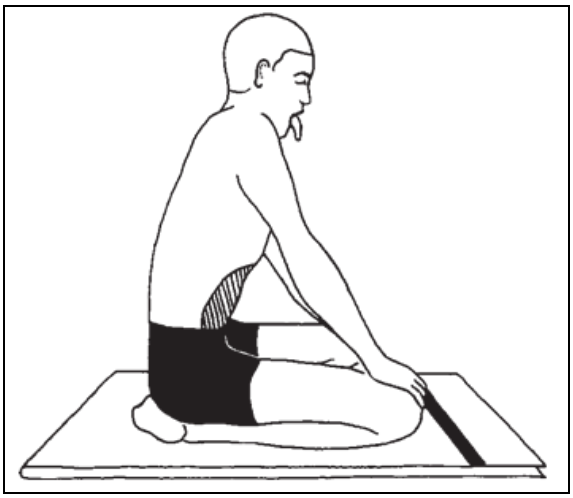
Practice 2: Manipura purification

- Assume a comfortable sitting pose.
- Hold the back straight and keep the eyes closed.
- Breathe slowly and deeply, feeling the expansion and contraction of the navel as you breathe in and out through the navel.
- Feel the breath expanding and contracting in the navel area for a few minutes.
- As the navel expands outward, feel that the breath is being pulled in through the navel, straight back to manipura in the spine.
- As the navel contracts inward, feel that the breath is flowing from manipura chakra in the spine to the navel and out of the body.
- Practise this for a few minutes each day while mentally repeating, 'manipura, manipura, manipura'.

Practice 3: Agnisar Kriya

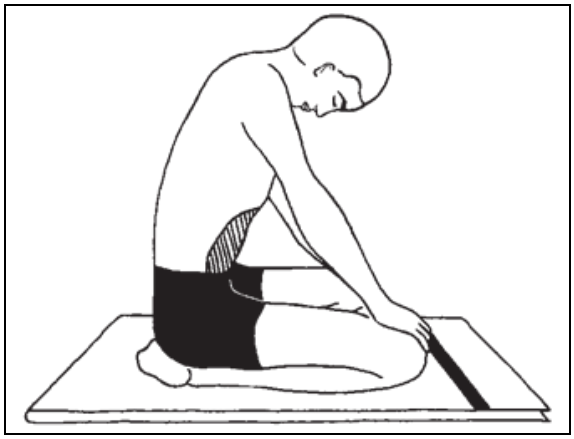
Preparatory practice: Swana Pranayama (panting breath)

- Sit in vajrasana.
- Keeping the toes together, separate the knees as far as possible (see figure 1).
- Keep both hands on the knees, straighten the arms and lean forward slightly.
- Open the mouth and extend the tongue outside.
- Breathe rapidly in and out while simultaneously expanding and contracting the abdomen.
- The respiration should be in harmony with the movement of the abdomen and should resemble the panting of a dog.



- Breathe in and out up to 25 times.

Agnisar Kriya (activating the digestive fire)

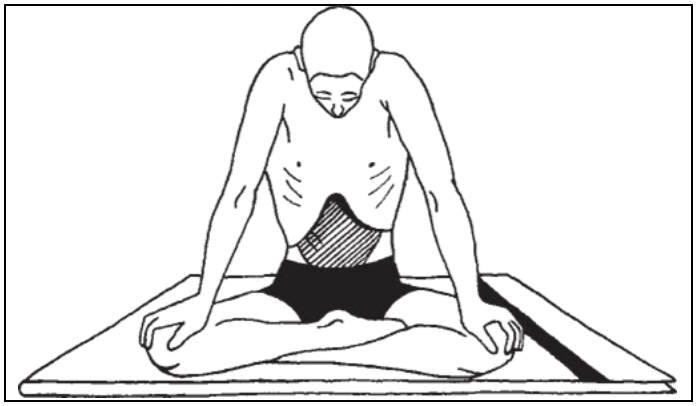


- Assume the same position (see figure 2).
- Exhale as completely as possible.
- Perform jalandhara bandha.
- Rapidly contract and expand the abdominal muscles repeatedly, for as long as you are able to retain the breath outside.
- Release jalandhara bandha and inhale fully.
- Perform the practice 4 more times, waiting until the breath has returned to normal between each round.

Contra-indications: People suffering from high blood pressure, heart disease or acute peptic or duodenal ulcers should not practise this kriya, nor should pregnant women or persons who have undergone abdominal surgery in the last six to nine months.

Practice note: Agnisar kriya should be practised on an empty stomach preferably in the early in the morning before breakfast. It should not be attempted until swana pranayama is mastered.

Practice 4: Uddiyana Bandha (abdominal contraction)

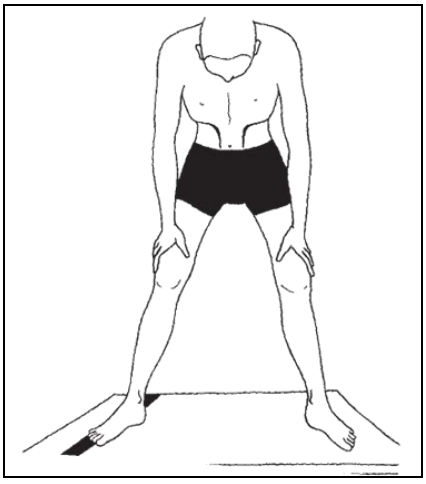


- Sit in a siddha/siddha yoni asana or padmasana with the spine erect and the knees touching the floor.
- If this is not possible, uddiyana bandha can be performed while standing.
- Place the hands on the knees, close the eyes and relax the whole body.
- Exhale completely and hold the breath outside.
- Perform jalandhara bandha.
- Then contract the abdominal muscles as far as possible inward and upward.
- This is a kind of sucking action of the muscles.
- Hold this lock for as long as the breath can be retained outside without straining.
- Concentrate on manipura chakra in the spine and repeat mentally, 'manipura, manipura, manipura'.
- Slowly relax the stomach muscles. Release jalandhara bandha and inhale.
- When the respiration has returned to normal, the process may be repeated.
- Practise a few rounds and gradually increase to ten.

Contra-indications: People suffering from high blood pressure, heart disease or acute peptic or duodenal ulcers should not practise this kriya, nor should pregnant women or persons who have undergone abdominal surgery in the last six to nine months.

Practice 5: Nauli (abdominal massaging)

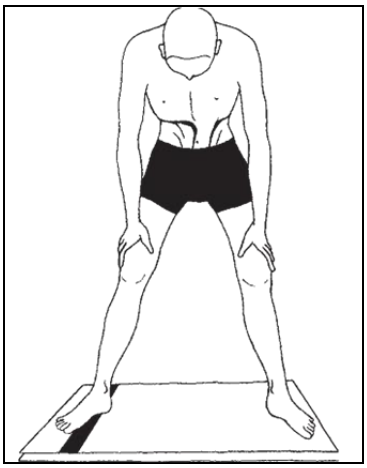
Stage 1: Madhyama Nauli (central abdominal contraction)



- Stand with the feet about a metre apart.
- Take a deep breath in through the nose and then exhale through the mouth, emptying the lungs as much as possible.
- Bend the knees slightly and lean forward, placing the palms on the thighs just above the knees, so that the knees are supporting the weight of the body.
- The arms should remain straight.
- Perform jalandhara bandha while retaining the breath outside.
- Keep the eyes open and watch the abdomen.
- Suck in the lower abdomen.
- Contract the rectus abdomini muscles so that they form a central arch running vertically in front of the abdomen.

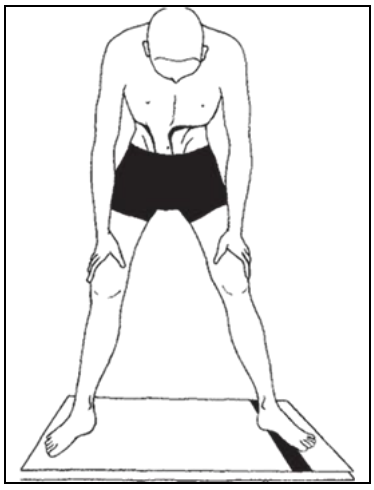
- Hold the contraction for as long as it is comfortable to hold the breath.
- Release the contraction, raise the head and return to the upright position.
- Inhale slowly and deeply, allowing the abdomen to expand.
- Relax the whole body.
- This is one round.
- Relax in the standing position until the heartbeat returns to normal.
- Repeat the practice.
- Madhyama nauli should be perfected before proceeding to the next stage.

Stage 2: Vama Nauli (left isolation)



- Follow the instructions for madhyama nauli to the point where the lower abdomen is contracted and the rectus abdomini muscles form a central, vertical arch down the abdomen.
- Isolate the rectus abdomini muscles at the left side.
- Contract the muscles to the left side as strongly as possible without straining.
- Return to madhyama nauli.
- Release the abdominal contraction, raise the head and return to the upright position.
- Inhale slowly and deeply, allowing the abdomen to expand. This is one round.
- Relax in the upright position until the heartbeat returns to normal. Proceed to stage 3.

Stage 3: Dakshina Nauli (right isolation)



- After completing vama nauli, practise in the same way but on the right side.
- Follow the instructions for madhyama nauli to the point where the lower abdomen is contracted and the rectus abdomini muscles form a central, vertical arch down the abdomen.
- Isolate the rectus abdomini muscles at the right side. Hold the contraction as tightly as possible while retaining the breath.
- Do not strain.
- Return to madhyama nauli.
- Release the abdominal contraction, raise the head and return to the upright position.
- Inhale slowly and deeply, allowing the abdomen to expand.
- This is one round.
- Relax in the upright position until the heartbeat returns to normal.
- Proceed to abdominal rotation or churning only after perfecting this practice.

Stage 4: Abdominal rotation or churning

- This practice should not be attempted until the previous three stages have been mastered.
- Practise vama nauli, then rotate the muscles to the right, dakshina nauli, and back to the left, vama nauli.
- Continue rotating the muscles from side to side.
- This process is known as churning.
- Start by practising 3 consecutive rotations, then release the abdominal contraction.
- Next start with dakshina nauli first, this time rotating the muscles from right to left, left to right 3 times consecutively.
- Then perform madhyama nauli, isolating the muscles at the centre.
- Raise the head and return to the upright position.
- Inhale slowly and deeply, allowing the abdomen to expand.
- This is one round.
- Relax in the upright position until the heartbeat returns to normal.
- Practise each round for as long as the breath can be retained.
- Do up to six 6 rounds.

Contra-indications: People suffering from high blood pressure, heart disease or acute peptic or duodenal ulcers should not practise this kriya, nor should pregnant women or persons who have undergone abdominal surgery in the last six to nine months.

Practice note: Nauli should not be attempted until agnisar kriya and uddiyana bandha have been perfected.

Practice 6: Union of prana and apana

- Sit in siddhasana or siddha yoni asana.
- Relax the whole body for a few minutes, bringing it to the point of absolute immobility.
- Now become aware of the natural abdominal breath.
- Centre the awareness on the movement of the navel as you inhale and exhale.
- Continue for a few minutes.
- Now become aware that there are two forces travelling to the navel – prana and apana.
- One force (apana) is ascending from mooladhara to the navel, while the other (prana), is descending to the navel from above.
- They must both reach the navel at the point of full inhalation.
- When you feel that the two forces are meeting in the navel, perform kumbhaka, retention of breath, and then develop mental awareness of the single central point of force in the navel.
- Do not strain.
- Release the breath and continue this practice in your own natural rhythm.
- The awareness of the two forces travelling and meeting in the navel centre must be simultaneous.
- Now, as the two forces are converging in the navel, gradually allow moola bandha to take place.
- Go on contracting moola bandha as you heighten your awareness of the force which is centred in the navel.
- Hold your breath for as long as you can, while centralizing the force in the navel and performing moola bandha.
- As you release the breath, release moola bandha as well.
- Do not strain.
- Go on practising for 3 minutes or more.

Practices for Anahata Chakra

MONTH 5

Anahata chakra can be awakened very simply through the practice of ajapa japa. Japa means 'repetition' and ajapa is the repetition of a mantra until it ultimately becomes the spontaneous form of your conscious awareness. Another important practice in anahata awakening is bhramari pranayama. Although it is called a pranayama, bhramari is actually a meditational practice. It is not directly related to controlling prana, as are other forms of pranayama. In the scriptures, the heart centre is termed 'the centre of unstruck sound' and also 'the cave of bees'. In bhramari, the humming sound of the bees is produced and traced towards its source. This develops deep mental and emotional relaxation and is extremely effective in cardiac disorders.

Anahata chakra is the centre of bhakti or devotion. It is awakened in accordance with the degree of devotion to guru, God, or personal deity, in whatever form or non-form one may visualize or understand the spiritual intelligence of the universe. All practices of yoga, especially when done with the blessings of the guru, will automatically awaken devotion in the spiritual heart (anahata chakra). There are many excellent books on bhakti yoga that will help to inspire the aspirant to follow this path. Any biographies of saints, yogis and bhaktas will also be useful. An excellent description of the process of bhakti yoga is given in our publication entitled, *A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya*, and in *Bhakti Yoga Sagar*, Volumes 1–5, by Swami Satyananda Saraswati.

Practice program

Practise these techniques for anahata chakra for one month and then begin those for awakening vishuddhi chakra. All the practices given for awakening ajna, mooladhara, swadhisthana and manipura chakras can be done if sufficient time is available. If not, then we suggest that you do a few selected techniques from each chakra sadhana as follows:

1. ***Ajna*** – trataka and shambhavi mudra
2. ***Mooladhara*** – moola bandha and nasikagra mudra
3. ***Swadhisthana*** – chakra and kshetram location, vajroli or sahajoli
4. ***Manipura*** – chakra and kshetram location, uddiyana bandha and nauli (if possible).

Practice 1: Anahata chakra and kshetram location

- Stand sideways in front of a mirror.
- Put one finger of one hand on the centre of the chest.
- Here you will find anahata kshetram.
- Put one finger of the other hand on the spine, directly behind the kshetram; this is anahata chakra.
- Sit down, press both fingers firmly for one minute, and then remove the fingers.
- The sensation at the chakra and kshetram will continue.
- Concentrate on the sensation at the chakra and mentally repeat, 'anahata, anahata, anahata', for a few minutes.

Practice 2: Anahata purification

- Assume a comfortable sitting posture.
- Hold the back straight but without strain.
- Keep the eyes closed.
- Breathe slowly and deeply, feeling the expansion and contraction of the chest as you breathe in and out for some minutes.
- Then become aware of the breath moving in and out of the anahata region.
- As the chest expands, feel that the breath flows in through the centre of the chest and back to anahata chakra.
- As the chest contracts, feel that the breath flows from anahata chakra in the spine, through the centre of the chest and out of the body.
- Practise this for some minutes, mentally repeating, 'anahata, anahata, anahata'.

Practice 3: Bhramari Pranayama (humming bee breath)

- Sit in a comfortable meditative pose.
- Adjust your position and relax fully for some minutes.
- Face forward.
- Hold the head and spine as straight as possible.
- Close the eyes.
- Relax the whole body.
- Keep the teeth slightly separated and the mouth closed throughout the entire practice.
- This allows the vibration to be experienced more distinctly in the brain.
- Plug the ears with the index fingers.
- Breathe in slowly and deeply.
- Then, while breathing out, produce a humming sound.
- The sound should be smooth and continuous for the full duration of exhalation.
- The humming need not be loud.
- The important thing is that you hear the sound reverberating within your head.
- The exhalation should be slow and controlled.
- At the end of exhalation, stop the humming sound and breathe in fully.
- Keep the eyes closed and the ears plugged.
- Again repeat the humming sound with the next exhalation.
- Try to relax fully during the practice.
- Do not strain in any way.
- Continue for 5 or 10 minutes.

Practice 4: Ajapa japa meditation

- Sit in siddhasana, siddha yoni asana or any posture which feels completely comfortable.
- Close the eyes and relax for a few minutes.
- Now become aware of the natural breath as it enters and leaves the body.
- Do not try to control the breath, just become a witness of the natural breathing process.

- Now become aware that the sound of inhalation is *So* and the sound of exhalation is *ham*.
- The natural mantra of the breath is *So-ham*.
- You have only to discover it.
- Be simultaneously aware of the natural breath, coupled with the idea of *So-ham-so-ham-so-ham.*
- You must be totally relaxed in this practice.
- Do not lose awareness of the mantra or your natural breath, even for an instant.
- Do not be concerned with the thoughts and feelings that arise.
- Allow them to come and go as they will.
- Remain ever aware of the natural breath and the ongoing mantra.
- Now become aware of the psychic breath which is flowing in an imaginary or psychic passage in the front of the body between the navel and the throat, and between the throat and the navel.
- With inspiration, this psychic breath rises from the navel to throat and its mantra is *So*.
- With expiration, the psychic breath descends from the throat back to the navel.
- Its mantra is *ham*.
- Maintain awareness of the breath passing through the psychic passageway and producing the sound *So-ham-soham-so-ham.*
- Continue this practice for 10 or 15 minutes more, allowing your breathing to be totally relaxed.

Practice note: Ajapa japa can be practised at any time, but it should be done for 5 to 10 minutes per day, either in the morning sadhana session or at night, immediately before sleep. It should be continued for at least one month.

Practice 5: Meditation - entering the heart space

Stage 1: Breath awareness

- Sit in siddhasana, siddha yoni asana or any other comfortable posture.
- Close the eyes and relax completely for some time.
- Concentrate the awareness in the throat region.
- Now become aware of the breath in the throat.
- Only be aware of the sensation of the breath in the throat for some time.
- Now add the awareness of the ingoing breath from the throat downwards.
- You are not concerned with the outgoing breath.
- Your attention is occupied only with the ingoing breath in the throat.
- Become aware of the inflowing breath in the throat passing within the network of the diaphragm.
- Be aware of the diaphragm – the rising and falling of the muscular floor separating the chest and lungs above from the abdominal organs below.
- With each inspiration, it drops into the abdomen a little, increasing the pressure there and causing the navel to expand.
- Simultaneously, the lungs are expanding fully in the chest. Be aware that with expiration the abdomen contracts, the diaphragm is rising and the lungs are emptying completely.
- Develop awareness of the diaphragm for some time.

Stage 2: Awareness of the heart space

- Now, also become aware of the akasha, the space within which the diaphragm is operating.
- With the ingoing breath you feel this space is filling up.
- Only be aware of the process of filling up the space.
- This process of filling up is only a basis for the awareness of this vast space.
- The process of feeling the breath is only the basis for experiencing the heart space.
- Become aware of the space in the heart; take your awareness directly there.
- Feel the space within the heart centre.
- It is contracting and expanding with the rhythm of the natural breath.
- Breath is only the basis.
- The process of filling up is only the basis.
- Go on to comprehend the whole space.
- Then you are aware of the space alone.
- Feel the contraction and expansion of this vast space.
- It is taking place on the rhythm of the natural breath.
- The breath is natural and spontaneous.
- Do not alter it in any way.
- Do not make it longer or shorter, deeper or more shallow, faster or slower.
- It has to become a spontaneous and voluntary movement of breath.
- In this practice, the awareness of the space in the heart is important.

Stage 3: Vision of blue lotus and lake

- If the awareness of the expansion and contraction of the heart space is constant and stabilized, after some time, many visions and experiences will manifest there.
- You do not have to visualize or imagine anything.
- The vision will come by itself when the awareness of the heart space is constant.
- The image is of a lake and a blue lotus.
- If you are able to feel the space of the heart contracting and expanding, then maintain your awareness there.
- If that is not possible, then you will have to feel the breath which is filling up the space.
- That is the first stage of the practice.
- The second stage is the direct feeling of the space and its expansion and contraction with the rhythm of the breath.
- The third stage is the awareness of the blue lotus and the still lake.
- It will come by itself.
- Keep yourself ready for that experience.

Stage 4: Ending the practice

- Now become aware of the natural inflowing and outflowing breath in the throat.
- Withdraw your awareness from the heart space and bring it to the natural breath in the throat.
- Maintain awareness of the inflowing and outflowing breath in the throat for some time.
- Practise for five or ten minutes. Chant Om three times.
- Allow the sound to manifest fully and spontaneously from deep within.
- For a few minutes, listen carefully for the inner vibration of the sound.
- Release your posture and open your eyes.

Practices for Vishuddhi Chakra

MONTH 6

Vishuddhi chakra can be directly awakened through the practices of jalandhara bandha, vipareeta karani asana and ujjayi pranayama, all of which are essential for eventual mastery of kriya yoga.

A minor chakra which is closely related to vishuddhi is called lalana chakra, which is located at the back of the roof of the mouth, at the soft palate, and it directly helps to awaken vishuddhi. For this reason, one of the kundalini kriyas, called amrit pan, is concerned with its direct stimulation. A simpler practice for awakening lalana is khechari mudra, which is described in this chapter.

Preparatory practices

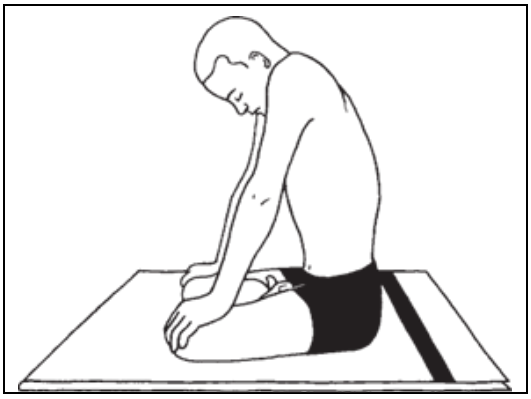
Many asanas can be utilized for purifying vishuddhi chakra. The most important are: bhujangasana, matsyasana, supta vajrasana and sarvangasana.

Practice program

Perfect these vishuddhi chakra practices over a period of one month and then start the practices for bindu. The sadhana for the other chakras can also be continued with a few selected techniques from each of the other chakras as follows:

1. ***Ajna*** – trataka and shambhavi mudra
2. ***Mooladhara*** – moola bandha and nasikagra mudra
3. ***Swadhisthana*** – chakra and kshetram location, vajroli or sahajoli.
4. ***Manipura*** – chakra and kshetram location, uddiyana bandha and nauli.
5. ***Anahata*** – chakra and kshetram location, ajapa japa.

Practice 1: Jalandhara Bandha (throat lock)



- Sit in any meditative pose which allows the knees to firmly touch the floor.
- Those who cannot sit like this can practise jalandhara bandha in a standing position.
- Place the palms of the hands on the knees.
- Close the eyes and relax the whole body.
- Inhale deeply, retain the breath inside and bend the head forward, pressing the chin tightly against the chest (particularly the sternum).
- Straighten the arms and lock them into position.
- Simultaneously hunch the shoulders upward and forward.
- This will ensure that the arms remain locked.
- The palms should remain on the knees.
- Stay in the final pose for as long as the breath can be held comfortably.
- Then bend the arms, relax the shoulders, slowly release the lock, raise the head and exhale.
- Repeat when the respiration returns to normal. Practise 5 times.

Contra-indications: Persons with high intracranial or blood pressure, or with heart ailments, should not practise without expert guidance.

Practice note: The whole practice can also be performed with the breath retained outside. Never inhale or exhale until the chin lock has been released and the head is upright.

Practice 2: Khechari Mudra (tongue lock)

- Sit in a comfortable meditative posture.
- Close the mouth and roll the tongue upward and backward so that the lower surface touches the upper palate.
- Stretch the tip of the tongue as far back as possible without strain.
- Keep it there for as long as is comfortable.
- If there is discomfort, relax the tongue for a few seconds and repeat.
- After some practise the tongue may be able to extend beyond the palate and up into the nasopharynx, where it will stimulate many vital nerve centres.

Breathing: Breathe normally during this practice unless ujjayi is used.

Duration: Over a period of months gradually reduce the breathing rate to seven or eight breaths per minute. This may be reduced further under expert guidance.

Practice 3: Ujjayi Pranayama (psychic breath)

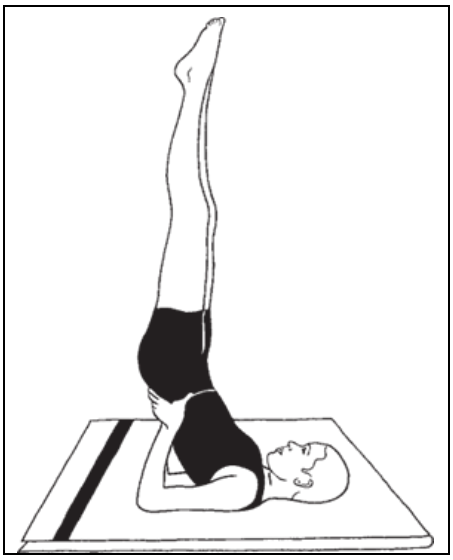
- Sit in a comfortable meditative posture.
- Practise khechari mudra. Feel that the breath is being drawn in and out through the throat, not the nostrils.
- Gently contract the glottis in the throat.
- When you breathe under these circumstances, a very soft snoring sound should automatically come from the throat region.
- It is like the breathing of a sleeping baby.
- Feel that you are breathing deeply from the abdomen and not the nose.
- Try to make the breaths long and relaxed.
- Practise for two minutes initially, then gradually extend to ten or twenty minutes.

Practice 4: Vishuddhi chakra and kshetram location and purification

- Sit or stand in front of a mirror.
- Place a finger of one hand on the glottis (the lump at the throat pit).
- This is the location point of vishuddhi kshetram.
- Then place a finger of the other hand on the spine, directly behind the kshetram.
- This point in the spine is called vishuddhi chakra.
- Press the spine for one minute in order to feel a sensation at the chakra area.
- Then lower the hands.
- Concentrate on the sensation at the chakra and repeat mentally, 'Vishuddhi, vishuddhi, vishuddhi'.
- Sit in a comfortable position with the back straight.
- Close the eyes and become aware of the breath.
- Fold the tongue back into khechari mudra and practise ujjayi pranayama.
- For a minute or so, be aware of the sound of the breath at the throat, and let the breathing become slower and deeper.
- Then with inhalation, imagine that the breath is being drawn in through vishuddhi kshetram at the front of the throat.

- Feel that the breath passes through the kshetram and eventually pierces vishuddhi chakra in the spine.
- With exhalation, feel the breath move from vishuddhi chakra, forward through the kshetram and eventually out, in front of the body.
- This is one round.
- Continue for a few minutes.
- Daily practise in this manner will gradually develop sensitivity to vishuddhi chakra and its kshetram.

Practice 5: Vipareeta Karani Asana (inverted pose)



- Lie flat on the floor with the feet together, the arms by the sides and the palms flat on the floor.
- Relax the whole body.
- Raise both legs, keeping them straight and together.
- Move the legs over the body towards the head.
- Push down on the arms and hands, raising the buttocks.
- Roll the spine from the floor, taking the legs over the head.
- Turn the palms up, bend the elbows and let the top of the hips rest on the base of the palms near the wrist.
- The hands cup the hips and support the weight of the body.
- Keep the elbows as close to each other as possible.
- Raise both the legs to the vertical position and relax the feet.
- In the final position, the weight of the body rests on the shoulders, neck and elbows, the trunk is at a 45 degree angle to the floor and the legs are vertical.
- Note that the chin does not press against the chest.
- Close the eyes and relax in the final pose for as long as is comfortable.
- To return to the starting position, slowly lower the spine, vertebra by vertebra, along the floor.
- Do not lift the head.
- When the buttocks reach the floor, lower the legs, keeping them straight.
- Relax in shavasana.

Duration: Advanced practitioners can hold the posture for 15 minutes or even more, Beginners should practise for a few seconds and add a few seconds daily.

Sequence: Shavasana should be done for a few minutes on completion of vipareeta karani asana, followed by a counterpose such as saral matsyasana.

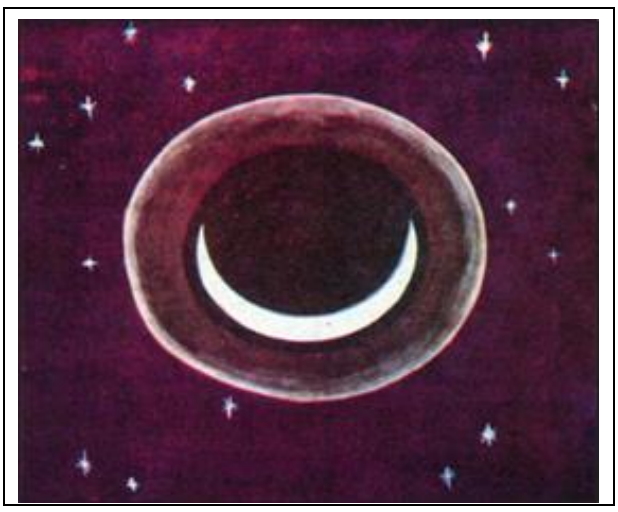
Contra-indications: This asana should not be done by sufferers of thyroid, liver or spleen enlargement, high blood pressure or heart ailments.

Practice note: Vipareeta karani asana is similar to sarvangasana, except that the chin is not pressed against the chest and the trunk is held at a 45 degree angle to the ground instead of at right angles.

Note: *Vipareeta karani asana is widely used in kriya yoga since it helps to redirect the energies of the body from the lower to the higher chakras. It is an integral part of the first of the kundalini kriyas called* vipareeta karani mudra.

Practices for Bindu

MONTH 7



The bindu trigger point is considered to be a tiny point at the top of the back of the head, but this point cannot be located in the physical body. It can only be found when the nada or sound of bindu has been discovered and traced to its source. Through the practices of *moorchha pranayama* and *vajroli/sahajoli mudra* awareness of the nada can be developed. Then, through practices such as *bhramari pranayama* and *shanmukhi mudra*, the nada can be traced to its source.

It is not intended that you practise all the nada yoga techniques at one time. You should adopt the practice which you can perform without difficulty. It does not matter which practice you commence with, because all the techniques lead to awareness of the same subtle inner sounds.

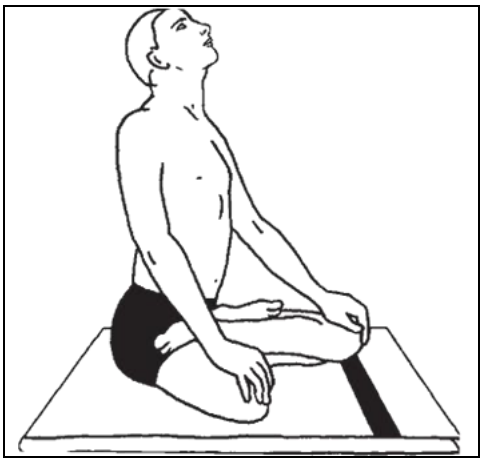
There is a very close relationship between swadhisthana chakra and bindu. This is because bindu is the point where the primal sound of creation first manifests. It is the point of origin of individuality, and swadhisthana is the source of the impetus towards reproduction and sexual function. This is the material expression of the desire to reunite with the infinite consciousness beyond bindu. Sperm and menses are the material distillates of the drop of ambrosial nectar which emerges from bindu. It should be noted that there is no kshetram corresponding to bindu.

Practice program

Practise the techniques for bindu for one month. Then begin the techniques given in the next chapter for integrated chakra awareness.

The selected techniques for ajna, mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura and anahata chakras can also be done daily, as given in the 'Practice program' section of the previous chapter. For vishuddhi chakra, jalandhara bandha, vishuddhi chakra purification and vipareeta karani asana can be done. Khechari mudra and ujjayi pranayama need not be done separately, since they are both incorporated into techniques given in this section.

Practice 1: Moorchha Pranayama (swooning or fainting breath)



- This practice requires a steady and firm meditation posture, preferably siddhasana or siddha yoni asana.
- Hold the spine and head upright and relax the whole body.
- Perform khechari mudra.
- Inhale through the nostrils with ujjayi pranayama while simultaneously bending the head backward and assuming shambhavi mudra.
- The inhalation should be slow and deep.
- At the end of inhalation, the head should lean backward, but not completely.
- The position of the head is as shown in the diagram.
- Retain the breath inside for as long as is comfortable, maintaining shambhavi mudra, but keeping the attention at bindu.
- Keep the arms straight by locking the elbows and pressing the knees with the hands.
- Fix your whole awareness on bindu.
- Then bend the arms and slowly exhale with ujjayi pranayama as you bend the head forward.
- Slowly lower and close the eyes.
- At the end of exhalation the head should face forward and the eyes should be completely closed.
- Relax the whole body for a short time, keeping the eyes closed.
- Release khechari mudra and breathe normally.
- Become aware of the lightness and calmness pervading the whole mind.
- This is one round.
- After some time, commence the second round.

Duration: Practise 10 or more rounds, or until a fainting sensation is experienced. Perform each round for as long as possible, but without strain.

Contra-indications: Those who suffer from high blood pressure, vertigo, high intracranial pressure or brain haemorrhage should not practise this technique. Discontinue the practice as soon as the fainting sensation is felt. The aim is to induce a state of semi-fainting, not complete unconsciousness.

Benefits: This practice is very powerful in inducing pratyahara and rendering the mind free from thoughts, especially when kumbhaka is prolonged.

Practice 2: Vajroli/sahajoli mudra with awareness of bindu

- Sit in siddhasana or siddha yoni asana, preferably with a thin cushion or a folded blanket beneath the buttocks.
- Close the eyes and relax the body.
- Take the awareness to the urethra.
- Contract the urethra as if it is being drawn upwards and inwards.
- This muscular action is similar to that made when trying to control the urge to urinate.
- Try to focus and confine the force of the contraction at the urethra.
- Try not to perform moola bandha or ashwini mudra at the same time.
- Contract for 10 seconds, release for 10 seconds.
- Continue this for a few minutes.

- Each time you attain full contraction of the urinary system, bring your awareness to swadhisthana chakra in the spinal column, at the level of the coccyx.
- Repeat, 'Swadhisthana, swadhisthana, swadhisthana', mentally.
- Then draw your awareness up through sushumna passage to bindu.
- Mentally repeat, 'bindu, bindu, bindu'.
- Then return to swadhisthana and release vajroli/sahajoli mudra.
- This is one round.
- Continue this alternately for several minutes, practising up to 25 rounds.

Practice note: This practice should be performed immediately after moorchha pranayama, as both these practices awaken the awareness of bindu.

Practice 3: Perception of subtle inner sound

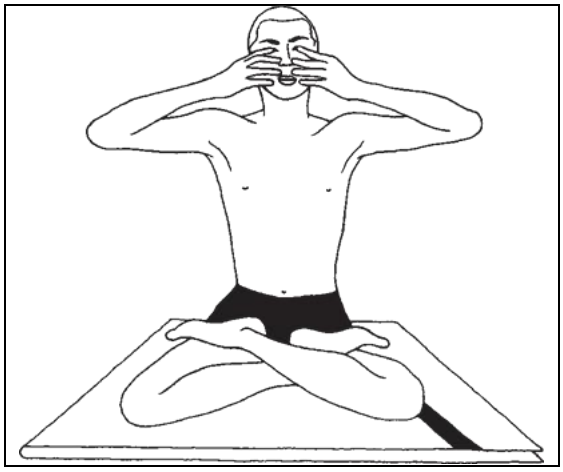
- This practice should be preceded by bhramari pranayama. In this stage no loud humming sound is produced, you only listen attentively to the inner sound.
- Keep the eyes closed and the fingers plugging the ears; this is necessary to block out external disturbances.
- Listen for any subtle sounds in the head.
- At first you may find this difficult, but keep trying.
- As soon as you become aware of a sound, any sound, try to fix your awareness on it to the exclusion of other sounds.
- Go on listening.
- After some days or weeks of practice, you should find that one sound is very distinct, and it will become louder and louder.
- Be totally aware of that sound.
- This is your vehicle of awareness – let your awareness flow towards this sound, leaving all other sounds and thoughts.
- Gradually, through practise, your sensitivity will increase.
- Eventually you will hear another sound, a faint sound in the background; it will be almost obliterated by the main, louder sound that you are hearing, but you will hear it nevertheless.
- Now listen to the new faint sound.
- Leave the other louder sound and continue to listen to the new sound.
- It will become more and more distinct.
- This will become your new, more subtle vehicle of awareness.
- Let this sound occupy your whole attention.
- This will further increase your sensitivity of perception.
- Eventually you will hear another faint sound emerging from behind this louder sound.
- Fix your awareness on this new sound, discarding the other sound.
- Continue in the same manner, allowing the new sound to occupy your whole awareness.
- When it becomes loud, try to perceive a more subtle underlying sound and fix your awareness on it.
- In this manner your perception will become progressively more sensitive, allowing you to dive deep into your being.

Practice note: It requires practise over a period of weeks and months to perceive these progressively more subtle sounds. For many weeks you may be unable to hear even the first sound.

This is a very simple but powerful technique that will bring results if you persevere. All that is necessary is time and effort. Try to practise for as long as you have time. Begin with 15 minutes or more of bhramari and this practice together.

Practice 4: Shanmukhi Mudra (closing the seven gates)

- Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana, if possible.
- Otherwise take a comfortable meditation asana and place a small cushion beneath the perineum to provide
- pressure in this area.
- Hold the head and spine straight.
- Close the eyes and place the hands on the knees.
- Completely relax the body and mind.
- Raise the hands in front of the face, with the elbows pointing sideways.
- Close the ears with the thumbs, the eyes with the index fingers, the nostrils with the middle fingers, and the mouth by placing the ring and little fingers above and below the lips.



- The fingers should gently but firmly close the seven doors.
- Release the pressure of the middle fingers and open the nostrils.
- Inhale slowly and deeply, using full yogic breathing.
- At the end of inhalation, close the nostrils with the middle fingers.
- Retain the breath for as long as is comfortable.
- Try to hear any sounds emanating from bindu at the back of the head, from the middle of the head, or perhaps the right ear.
- At first you will either hear many sounds or none at all.
- Just continue listening.
- Retain the breath inside for as long as is comfortable.
- Then release the pressure of the middle fingers and slowly breathe out.
- This is one round.
- Inhale once more, close the nostrils, and retain the breath.
- Listen to the inner sounds.
- After a comfortable length of time, release the nostrils and breathe out.
- Continue in this way for the duration of the practice.
- During the period of breath retention, your full awareness should be directed to the perception of inner nada.
- At first there may be a confused jumble of sounds, but gradually you will hear a specific sound.
- This may take a few days or weeks, but it will be perceived.
- When you hear a distinct sound, be totally aware of it.
- It will become clearer and clearer.
- Keep your awareness fixed on the sound.
- Listen very carefully.
- If your sensitivity is sufficiently developed, you will hear another sound in the background.
- It may be faint, but perceptible.
- Leave the first sound and transfer your awareness to the perception of the fainter sound.
- In this way, you will transcend the first sound.
- Eventually this second sound will overwhelm your whole attention.
- Again, with practise and enhanced sensitivity, you will hear a further sound start to emerge.
- It will be faintly perceptible behind the louder second sound.
- Direct your awareness to this new sound.
- Carry on in this way – perceive a sound and then discard it when you can hear a more subtle sound.
- The more subtle the sound you perceive, the deeper you will delve into the depth of your being.
- Continue this practice for a few minutes.

Breathing: This technique is more effective if you can retain your breath for extended periods of time. Those aspirants who have been practising nadi shodhana pranayama regularly for some months beforehand, will find shanmukhi mudra an easy and effective means of introspection.

Awareness: The point of awareness during the practice should be fixed at the back of the head in the bindu region. However, if you hear a distinct sound in any other area, such as the right ear or the middle of the head, then your awareness should be fixed there.

Some people may find it easier to listen to the nada in the region of the heart space (anahata chakra), especially those of a devotional nature. The important thing is not so much the point of awareness, but that the awareness remains fixed on progressively more subtle sounds. Total absorption on the nada can lead to dhyana or the meditative state of awareness.

Practice note: Do not expect to hear subtle sounds on your first attempt. Practice is necessary. Eventually you will be able to readily transcend the gross external sounds and then the progressively more subtle sounds. Do not dwell on any of the sounds for too long. This is not the purpose of the practice. The aim is to leave behind each sound you discover and to go deeper, to reach the source of all sound. Do not get lost or distracted by the beautiful sounds which will manifest on your journey.

Shanmukhi mudra is a more advanced practice than bhramari. It is slightly more difficult as it is not preceded by a vocalized humming sound, and it is combined with retention of the breath. Shanmukhi mudra is suitable for those who have a reasonably harmonized mind and are not beset by distractions.

Note*:* Shanmukhi mudra *means 'the closing of the seven gates'. It is so called because the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and the mouth are closed during the practice. These are the seven doors of outer perception. It is via these doorways that one receives the sense data from the outside world. When these doors are closed, we facilitate the direction of the awareness internally; that is, into the mind.*

Practices for Integrated Chakra Awareness

MONTH 8

So far we have given a series of practices for each of the individual chakras. In this chapter we will describe practices which are concerned with the overall awakening of the chakras. Of course, the awakening of one chakra cannot take place in isolation; it has repercussions on all the chakras to a greater or lesser extent. The techniques for specific chakras will also influence all the chakras, but the following techniques systematically help to activate all the chakras together and bring balance into the whole mind-body-chakra axis:

1. Chakra Meditation
2. Musical Chakra Meditation
3. Chaturtha Pranayama
4. Chakra Yoga Nidra
5. Unmani Mudra
6. Beeja Mantra Sanchalana
7. Drawing the Chakras

Practice program

You will not have time to do all the practices given in this chapter. Therefore, we suggest that you practise the following for one month: Chakra meditation, chaturtha pranayama, chakra yoga nidra, unmani mudra and beeja mantra sanchalana daily.

Musical chakra meditation and drawing the chakras, can be done if you have the time and the inclination. They can be omitted without any detriment to arousing kundalini. The following practices for each individual chakra can be done:

1. ***Ajna*** – shambhavi mudra
2. ***Mooladhara*** – moola bandha and nasikagra mudra
3. ***Swadhisthana*** – vajroli/sahajoli
4. ***Manipura*** – uddiyana bandha
5. ***Anahata*** – ajapa japa
6. ***Vishuddhi*** – jalandhara bandha and vipareeta karani asana
7. ***Bindu*** – shanmukhi mudra

After one month you can start to learn kriya yoga, having first of all obtained the advice of an experienced yoga teacher, or by writing to Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, Bihar – 811201, India.

Practice 1: Chakra meditation

For the purpose of practising kriya yoga and some of the more advanced forms of meditation, it is essential to develop subtle awareness of the chakras, and to be able to locate them all accurately. In the beginning most people do not actually experience any sensation and initially it is simply a matter of imagination, but as the awareness becomes more subtle, the pulsation will definitely be experienced.

Technique

Stage 1: Preparation

- Make yourself comfortable in a meditative asana, preferably siddhasana or siddha yoni asana.
- Place both hands on the knees in chin mudra.
- Close the eyes and make the whole body still and steady throughout.
- The spinal column should be absolutely upright and straight, with the back and shoulders fully relaxed.
- The head should be poised comfortably on top of the spinal column.
- The whole body is completely relaxed and immobile.
- It is motionless like a statue.
- Maintain absolute awareness of the physical body for several minutes.

Stage 2: Ajna awareness

- Become aware of the spinal column.
- Now bring your awareness to ajna chakra.
- Ajna chakra is located inside the brain at a point directly behind the eyebrow centre and on top of the spinal column, where the pineal gland is situated.
- Try to discover a pulsation within this ajna chakra region.
- Be absolutely aware of this pulsation.
- Now synchronize the mantra *Om* with the pulsation in the ajna chakra region.

- *Om, Om, Om, Om, Om* should be the form of your awareness with the pulsation of ajna chakra.
- Count the pulsation 21 times.
- Now begin to practise ashwini mudra, contraction and relaxation of the anus.
- Do not be concerned with ajna chakra, only practise ashwini mudra.
- It should be practised at a medium speed, neither too quickly nor too slowly.
- After practising like this for a few sessions, you should be able to feel the centre of ajna automatically while performing ashwini.
- When that happens you can begin to concentrate directly on ajna.
- Until then, practise ashwini mudra for about four minutes.

Stage 3: Mooladhara awareness

- Now bring your awareness to the perineal region and the psychic centre of mooladhara chakra.
- Discover the precise psychic point of mooladhara chakra.
- Try to discover a subtle pulsation there.
- Localize the pulsation very precisely in the mooladhara region and count 21 pulsations.
- Now open your eyes and adopt nasikagra drishti; gazing at the nose tip.
- Do not be concerned with mooladhara chakra, but only with nose tip awareness.
- The simultaneous awareness of mooladhara chakra will come after some time.
- Continue this practice for three minutes.

Stage 4: Swadhisthana awareness

- Now bring your awareness to swadhisthana chakra in the region of the tailbone.
- Discover the psychic point of swadhisthana chakra.
- Try to discover the pulsation in this centre.
- Count this pulsation 21 times.
- Now perform vajroli/sahajoli mudra – the drawing up and releasing of the urinary system.
- Continue vajroli/sahajoli mudra for four minutes.

Stage 5: Manipura awareness

- Now bring your awareness to the region of the navel.
- Become aware of the psychic breath in the frontal passage from mooladhara to the navel, and from the throat to the navel.
- Both these breaths must reach the navel at the point of full inhalation.
- When the two forces meet and coincide at the navel, retain the breath there, and develop the mental awareness of the single central point of force in the navel.
- Then release the breath and continue this practice in your own natural rhythm.
- Continue for four minutes.
- Now take your awareness directly back to manipura chakra, within the spinal column, directly behind the navel.
- Try to isolate that point and the pulsation there.
- Count the pulse 21 times in manipura chakra.

Stage 6: Anahata awareness

- Now bring your awareness to the region of anahata chakra in the spinal column, at the level of the centre of the chest.
- Isolate that point and try to discover a pulsation within it.
- Count the pulsation 21 times.
- Now bring your awareness to the space of the heart.
- First become aware of the incoming breath in the throat.
- With the incoming breath, feel the vast heart space expand.
- Feel the heart space directly – contracting and expanding with the rhythm of the spontaneous, natural breath.
- Be aware of the vision which will come in the vast heart space.
- Allow it to come by itself.
- Continue for two minutes.

Stage 7: Vishuddhi awareness

- Now bring your awareness to the throat pit and then take it directly back to vishuddhi chakra in the spinal column.
- Repeat mentally, 'Vishuddhi, vishuddhi, vishuddhi'.

- Try to discover the pulsation within vishuddhi and witness it for 21 pulsations.

Stage 8: Chakra awareness in sushumna

- Now, as the name of each chakra is given, move your awareness within the sushumna passage so as to touch each chakra mentally with a small imaginary flower.
- Your awareness of each chakra must be very precise – mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna; ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana, mooladhara.
- Guide the consciousness through the chakras in sushumna, ascending and descending four more times.

Stage 9: Ending the practice

- Now begin to end the practice.
- Bring the awareness back to the body and chant *Om* three times.

Practice 2: Musical chakra meditation

Sound is a particularly effective and enjoyable means of developing awareness of the chakras. This is why nada yoga is so powerful in spiritual awakening. The seven notes of the musical scale correspond to the vibration of the seven chakras from mooladhara to sahasrara, and this is the basis for a very effective musical meditation technique. The best instrument of all is the human voice, which can be supplemented by the harmonium. However, other instruments such as the tampura and tabla can also be used.

Latin scale	Chakra (Sanskrit)	Chakra (English)	Sanskrit	scale
Do	**Mooladhara**	Root	Sa	Ôãã
Re	**Swadhisthana**	Sacral	Re	Àñ
Mi	**Manipura**	Solar Plexus	Ga	Øã
Fa	**Anahata**	Heart	Ma	½ã
So	**Vishuddhi**	Throat	Pa	¹ã
La	**Ajna**	Third Eye	Dha	£ã
Ti	**Bindu**	Dot	Ni	äáfã
Do	**Sahasrara**	Crown	Sa	Ôãã

Technique

Stage 1: At first the musical scale of the harmonium is ascended very slowly while the awareness begins in mooladhara and ascends sushumna from one chakra to the next, feeling each note vibrate in the spinal column in the region of its corresponding chakra.
When sahasrara is attained, descend the awareness with the musical scale down through sushumna to mooladhara. The consciousness ascends and descends sushumna with the scale many times, slowly speeding up as chakra location becomes quick and effortless.

Stage 2: Now the voice is integrated with the notes. The names of the chakras are chanted very precisely. The names themselves are mantras, and if intoned with the correct note and pronunciation, each centre can be set vibrating, and the sushumna passage and the whole body begin to vibrate with energy. This practice is very powerful. It can be continued for ten minutes or more.

Stage 3: In this stage the awareness still ascends and descends through sushumna with the musical scale, but the voice makes a continuous a-a-a-a-a-a sound (as in 'calm') as it ascends and descends through the chakras. In the final stage, the full power of the voice is released and a tremendous energy is generated, provided the pitch is maintained accurately.

Practice 3: Chaturtha Pranayama (fourth pranayama)

Chaturtha pranayama combines breathing, mantra and chakra awareness. Although it is not widely taught, it is a powerful technique that is both a pranayama and a meditation. This practice will lead to deeper awareness and knowledge of the chakras. It is also a preparatory technique for kriya yoga as it develops sensitivity to both the psychic spinal passage and the chakras.
Chaturtha pranayama means 'fourth pranayama' or 'pranayama of the fourth state', or a transcendental state where words and definitions fail to reach.

Technique

Stage 1: Breath awareness

- Sit in any comfortable meditative posture.

- Hold the head and spine erect and close the eyes.
- Breathe deeply.
- Let the breath become deeper and more subtle.
- Fix your awareness on the rhythmical flow of the breath.
- Continue for a number of rounds.

Stage 2: Mantra awareness

- Mentally synchronize the manta *Om* with the breath.
- The sound 'O' should synchronize with inhalation.
- The sound 'm-m-m-m-m' should synchronize with exhalation.
- This sound should only be mental.
- Breathe through the nose, keeping the mouth closed.
- Continue in this manner with awareness of the flow of the breath and the mantra.

Stage 3: Chakra awareness

- Now fix your attention at the eyebrow centre.
- Feel you are breathing in through that centre with the mental sound 'O'.
- Continue with awareness of the breath, mantra and psychic centre.
- Focus your attention on mooladhara.
- With inhalation and the sound 'O-o-o-o-o', feel the breath passing up through the spine, piercing all the chakras – mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna, sahasrara.
- Continue for a number of rounds.
- Again fix your attention at the eyebrow centre.
- Continue the mental repetition of *Om* synchronized with the breath, but do not be aware of the breath.
- Only be aware of the mantra and the psychic centre.
- Feel the 'O' and the 'm-m-m-m-m' sound.
- Continue in this manner for as long as possible.

Practice 4: Chakra yoga nidra Yoga nidra can be used very effectively to develop your awareness of the chakras. Here is an example of a yoga nidra/relaxation session which includes visualization and rotation of awareness through the psychic centres. Teachers can adopt this practice directly for their classes. For personal use, someone can lead you through the practice, or you can put the instructions onto a tape.

Technique

Stage 1: Preparation

- Place a folded blanket on the floor and lie on it in shavasana.
- Loosen your clothing so you feel perfectly comfortable.
- If necessary, cover yourself with a blanket to keep warm, or put a sheet over you to keep insects away.
- The mouth and eyes should remain closed throughout the practice.
- Make sure that the spinal column is straight, in line with the head and neck, and that the hips and shoulders are fully relaxed.
- Keep the feet and legs slightly apart.
- The arms should be beside your body but not touching, and the palms should be facing up.
- Adjust your position so that you feel perfectly comfortable.
- Tell yourself firmly that you will not move your body throughout the practice.

Stage 2: Sinking of the body

- Look at the space in front of your closed eyes.
- Imagine that the space surrounds your whole body.
- Your body is immersed in that space.
- Simultaneously be aware of your body.
- It feels very light, as light as a leaf falling from a tree.
- Imagine that your body is slowly sinking into the space that you see in front of your closed eyes, like a falling leaf.
- Your body is slowly sinking into the infinite space.
- Be aware of this feeling.
- Continue in this manner for a few minutes.

Stage 3: Rhythmical breath awareness

- Become aware of your breathing.

- Awareness of the rise and fall of the navel with each breath.
- As you breathe in, feel you are sucking in air through the navel.
- As you breathe out, imagine that you are pushing air out from the navel.
- It is a rhythmical process.
- Do not alter the natural breath in any way, just become aware of it.

Stage 4: Sankalpa

- Repeat your sankalpa in a short positive sentence.
- It should be the crystallization of your spiritual aspiration and you should not change it.
- Repeat it with feeling, from the heart, not the lips.
- Repeat your sankalpa at least three times.

Stage 5: Visualization – body awareness

- Now try to visualize your own body.
- Imagine that you are viewing it from outside.
- Feel that your perception is outside and your body is an object of study.
- You may find visualization difficult – do not worry, just do your best.
- If you wish, you can imagine that there is a large mirror suspended over your body and that your body is reflected in it.
- Look at your own reflection.
- See your whole body: feet, knees, thighs, abdomen, chest, both hands, arms, shoulders, neck, head, mouth, nose, ears, eyes, eyebrow centre, your whole face and your whole body.
- Combine rotation of awareness of each part with visualization of that part.
- Continue in this manner for a few minutes.

Stage 6: Psychic centres – rotation of awareness

- Now you have to discover the location of the chakras.
- You must develop awareness of each psychic centre.
- Start from the base of the spine and move your awareness upward.
- First become aware of mooladhara. In the male body it is situated in the perineum, between the anus and genitals, and in the female body it is located at the cervix – the mouth of the womb.
- Try to feel the sensation at mooladhara. It is a very specific point which you are trying to isolate.
- When you have found it, repeat mentally, 'Mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'.
- Now move on to the second chakra, swadhisthana. It is located at the base of the spine, in the coccyx.
- Be aware of the sensation at that point and repeat mentally, 'Swadhisthana, swadhisthana, swadhisthana'.
- The third chakra is manipura.
- It is located in the spine in line with the navel.
- Feel this point and mentally repeat, 'Manipura, manipura, manipura".
- Then become aware of anahata chakra, located in the spine, directly behind the centre of the chest.
- Try to locate that point exactly and mentally repeat, 'Anahata, anahata, anahata'.
- Now bring your awareness to vishuddhi chakra, situated in the spine, directly behind the throat pit.
- Feel the sensation arising at that point and mentally repeat, 'Vishuddhi, vishuddhi, vishuddhi'.
- The next chakra is ajna.
- Ajna chakra is located at the very top of the spine in the region of the pineal gland, directly behind the eyebrow centre.
- Fix your awareness on that area and mentally repeat, 'Ajna, ajna, ajna'.
- Now bring your awareness to bindu, at the top back portion of the head.
- Feel that tiny point as precisely as possible, and repeat mentally, 'Bindu, bindu, bindu'.
- Finally, become aware of sahasrara, at the crown of the head, and repeat mentally, 'Sahasrara, sahasrara, sahasrara'.
- Now repeat this process, slowly descending through the chakras in reverse order: sahasrara, bindu, ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana and mooladhara.
- This is one complete round of chakra rotation.
- Now start a second round: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna, bindu, sahasrara; sahasrara, bindu, ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana, mooladhara.
- This completes the second round.
- Begin a third round, this time a little faster.
- As you fix your attention at each point, try to feel a slight vibration there, a tiny pulsation.
- If you wish, you can chant *Om* mentally as you locate each point in turn.

- Practise at least five rounds and as many more as time permits.

Stage 7: Psychic centres - visualization

- Now try to visualize the symbols of each chakra.
- You can use your own personal system of psychic symbols or the traditional chakra symbols as follows.
- As each chakra is named, try to feel that point being lightly pressed by the thumb, and simultaneously visualize the symbol.
- The psychic symbol for mooladhara is a deep red, fourpetalled lotus.
- Inside there is a smoky lingam around which a snake is coiled three and a half times.
- The snake's head is facing upward.
- Try to visualize this symbol to the best of your ability and associate it with that particular location in the body.
- Then proceed to swadhisthana chakra.
- The symbol is a six-petalled vermilion lotus, within which is depicted a starry night above the sea.
- The main focal point is the crescent moon.
- Try to visualize this symbol.
- Move to manipura chakra.
- It is symbolized by a ten-petalled yellow lotus, and in the centre is blazing fire.
- Visualize this symbol, imagining that the lotus is actually growing from manipura chakra.
- Proceed to anahata chakra, represented by a twelvepetalled blue lotus.
- In the centre is a solitary flame burning in the darkness.
- Try to visualize this symbol while feeling the exact position in the body.
- Move to vishuddhi chakra, symbolized by a sixteenpetalled purple lotus.
- In the middle there is a pure white drop of nectar.
- Visualize this location in the body.
- Then proceed to ajna chakra which is symbolized by a two-petalled silver-grey lotus.
- On the left hand petal is the full moon and on the right hand petal, a glowing sun.
- In the centre is a black lingam and an *Om* sign.
- Create a mental image of this symbol and its exact location.
- Move on to bindu.
- It is symbolized by a tiny white drop of nectar.
- Visualize this symbol at the top back of the head.
- Finally, move to sahasrara, the fountainhead of all the chakras.
- It is represented by a thousand-petalled lotus. In the centre is a white lingam.
- Visualize this symbol at the crown of the head.
- Now visualize all these symbols in the reverse order: sahasrara, bindu, ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana and mooladhara.
- This is the end of one round.
- Spend a few seconds visualizing each centre.
- Do a few more rounds according to the amount of time available.

Stage 8: Eyebrow centre awareness

- Fix your attention at the eyebrow centre.
- Feel your pulse at this point.
- Become aware of its continuous rhythmical beat.
- Mentally synchronize repetition of the mantra *Om* with this pulse.
- Continue for a few minutes.

Stage 9: Sankalpa/Ending the practice

- Repeat your sankalpa three times with full emphasis and feeling.
- Become aware of your natural breath.
- Become aware of your whole physical body.
- Become aware of the outer sense perceptions.
- Slowly begin to move your body.
- When you have fully externalized your awareness, slowly sit up and open your eyes.

Practice 5: Unmani mudra (attitude of mindlessness)

Unmani mudra is an excellent practice for developing awareness of the chakras in the spine, from bindu down to mooladhara. It is also an integral part of many of the kriya yoga practices (nada, pawan and shabda

sanchalana, maha mudra and maha bheda mudra), and therefore it should be mastered before attempting to learn and practise these techniques.

The word *unmani* means, 'no mind' or 'thoughtlessness', and refers to the state which arises during meditation. Therefore, unmani mudra means, 'the attitude of mindlessness or thoughtlessness'.

Technique

- Sit in any comfortable meditation pose, preferably siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana with the back straight.
- Open the eyes fully, without focusing on anything external.
- Take a deep breath in and, holding the breath inside, focus the awareness at bindu.
- As you breathe out, imagine the breath going down the spine.
- Simultaneously, let your awareness descend the spine, passing through all the chakras: ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana, mooladhara, one after the other.
- The eyes should slowly close and be fully closed by the time the awareness reaches mooladhara.
- Although the eyes remain open throughout the practice, the attention should be internalized on the chakras and breath; that is, the eyes are open, but you are looking within.
- Do not try too hard, but allow the process to occur spontaneously.
- This is one round.
- Inhale deeply and begin the second round. Do 11 rounds.

Practice note: Physically this practice is very easy to perform. The emphasis, however, should be on the mental process taking place. When the eyes are open they should not register anything outside.

Practice 6: Beeja Mantra Sanchalana (conducting the seed sound)

This practice is one of the techniques of kriya yoga, but is not normally one of the twenty kriyas that we teach. It is concerned with mentally repeating the beeja mantra of each kshetram and chakra, one after the other, whilst simultaneously moving the awareness through each chakra.

The word *beeja* means 'seed', mantra means 'mystic sound' and sanchalana means 'conduction'. Therefore, this practice can be called 'the conduction of the seed sound'.

Psychic passages

In the following kriya, beeja mantra sanchalana, as well as in a number of practices of kriya yoga, you will be required to move your awareness through two psychic passages called *arohan* and *awarohan.* The path of these passages is as follows:

Arohan, the ascending passage, goes from mooladhara chakra, forward to swadhisthana kshetram in the pubic area, then follows the curve of the belly to manipura kshetram, upward to anahata kshetram and vishuddhi kshetram in the front of the throat, then in a straight line to bindu at the top back of the head.

There is also another pathway for the arohan psychic passage that has been taught by tradition throughout the ages. On the ascent from mooladhara, swadhisthana kshetram and onwards, the awareness is taken from vishuddhi kshetram to lalana chakra in the palate, then to the nosetip, to the eyebrow centre, and following the curvature of the skull through sahasrara at the top of the head, to bindu at the back of the crown, where there is a little whorl of hair. In this book we will refer to the arohan passage as connecting vishuddhi kshetram directly to bindu; however, you can experiment with both passages and use whichever one suits you best.

Awarohan is the descending passage which starts at bindu, travels forward to ajna chakra, then down through sushumna in the spine, passing through all the chakras in turn to finally terminate at mooladhara.

In the following practice you will have to familiarize yourself with these two psychic passages, and this will also be useful as a preparation for the kundalini kriyas.

Beeja mantras

The beeja mantras for each kshetram and chakra are as follows:

1. **Mooladhara – *Lam***
2. **Swadhisthana – *Vam***
3. **Manipura – *Ram***
4. **Anahata – *Yam***
5. **Vishuddhi – *Ham***

6. **Ajna – *Om***
7. **Bindu – *Om***

Technique

- Sit in any comfortable position, preferably siddhasana/ siddha yoni asana.
- Keep the head and spine straight and the eyes closed.
- Throughout the practice there is no physical movement; the kriya is performed mentally.
- Bring your attention to mooladhara chakra.
- Repeat the mantra *Lam* mentally, once, and try to feel the vibration at mooladhara chakra.
- Then ascend through arohan.
- Let your attention jump to swadhisthana kshetram and repeat the mantra *Vam,* feeling the vibration at that point.
- Jump to manipura kshetram and repeat the mantra *Ram.*
- At anahata kshetram, *Yam*.
- At vishuddhi kshetram, *Ham.*
- At bindu, *Om*.
- Then descend through awarohan.
- Repeat *Om* at ajna, in the centre of the head.
- Repeat *Ham* at vishuddhi chakra in the spine.
- At anahata chakra, *Yam.*
- At manipura chakra, *Ram*.
- At swadhisthana, *Vam*.
- Then return to the starting point, mooladhara, and begin the next round by repeating the mantra *Lam*.
- Your awareness should jump from one centre to the next. Do 9 rounds, or more if you have time.

Practice note: Beeja mantra sanchalana is an excellent preparatory practice for kriya yoga sadhana. You may also practise this by spending some time, for example five minutes, at each kshetram or chakra, chanting the mantra out loud on a low key and feeling it vibrating at the chakra.

Practice 7: Drawing the chakras

Drawing of mandalas, such as the chakras, is an important part of tantra. Many of the practices require that the correct mandalas be constructed first of all. The creation of a chakra diagram should be done with absolute awareness and concentration, and its measurements and dimensions must be exact. You should try to ensure that you will be undisturbed for at least an hour, and approach the exercise as you do meditation. In some Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, mandalas are drawn and painted as part of the daily sadhana, as is the practice in several Greek Orthodox monasteries, where icons are painted in minute detail as daily meditation.

Make sure you have all the necessary materials; pencils, pens, rubbers, ruler, compass, colours or paints, so that you will not have to disturb your concentration once you have started. If you have a sadhana room, then that is the best place to create your mandalas. A good size for drawing the chakras on art paper is about 9" square, as this size is most useful for visual display and concentration practices. Larger and smaller sized chakras can be made for other purposes.

By first using only a black pen, one can plainly see the simple yet subtle lines and formations, and discover the hidden symbology as it becomes visually clearer in the mind. The next step is to colour it, according to the traditional colours described in the text. In this way, mandalas of each of the seven chakras can be completed over seven or more sessions.

This practice is very relaxing and enjoyable. You may like to create more subjective and artistic impressions of the chakras, with your own colours and symbols, as you come to understand them in a personal way. This expands your awareness to the many possibilities of experiencing not only the chakras, but life itself.

The chakras should not be interpreted on just one or two levels, but in many dimensions. After drawing and painting the chakras successfully, you can then take the next step and create the chakras in a three dimensional form. For this you can use any number of materials such as clay, plasticine, wire, fibreglass, copper or stone.

You must remember, however, that the traditional drawings are as subjective as your feelings and experiences of the chakra. Therefore, use your own experiences to express the deeper and inner spiritual aspects, on paper, in

clay or stone, etc. Through this, you will find a clarity of vision arising out of what once seemed a confused and blurred picture of life.

Your Sadhana Program

The practices of kundalini yoga must be adopted systematically. We suggest that you practise and perfect the sadhana for each chakra for one month or more, before moving on to the next. The sadhana will continue for eight months, as outlined below:

Month 1: **Practices for ajna chakra**

- Anuloma viloma pranayama Trataka
- Shambhavi mudra with om chanting

Month 2: **Practices for mooladhara chakra**

- Chakra location Moola bandha Nasikagra drishti

Month 3: **Practices for swadhisthana chakra**

- Chakra and kshetram location Ashwini mudra
- Vajroli/sahajoli mudra

Month 4: **Practices for manipura chakra**

- Chakra and kshetram location Manipura purification
- Agnisar kriya Uddiyana bandha Nauli
- Union of prana and apana

Month 5: **Practices for anahata chakra**

- Chakra and kshetram location Anahata purification Bhramari
- Pranayama
- Ajapa japa
- Meditation – entering the heart space

Month 6: **Practices for vishuddhi chakra**

- Jalandhara bandha Khechari mudra Ujjayi pranayama
- Chakra and kshetram location and purification Vipareeta karani asana

Month 7: **Practices for bindu**

- Moorchha pranayama
- Vajroli/sahajoli mudra with bindu awareness Perception of subtle inner sound
- Shanmukhi mudra

Month 8: **Practices for integrated chakra awareness**

- Chakra meditation Musical chakra meditation Chaturtha pranayama
- Chakra yoga nidra Unmani mudra
- Beeja mantra sanchalana Drawing the chakras

Kundalini Kriyas of Kriya Yoga

The following tantric kriyas provide what is possibly the most efficient method for systematically evolving man's consciousness that has ever been developed. They are said to have been the teachings for the transcendental sadhana which Lord Shiva gave to his disciple and wife, Parvati.

By tradition, kriya yoga was never taught publicly. The kriyas were always communicated verbally from guru to disciple. It is only in recent years that these kriyas have been published in accordance with the needs of this era. These kriyas are rather advanced and too powerful for the average aspirant. Before an aspirant takes up their practice, he or she should have a thorough familiarity with and practical experience of all the preliminary practices included in the book. Also, it is advisable that he takes up these kriyas only under the guidance of a guru, who can see that the aspirant is fully prepared for them and that any obstacles which arise while the aspirant is practising do not cause any harm in the way of disease, mental imbalance or psychic dislocation.

If possible, try to come to an ashram for one month for full initiation into the higher practices of kriya yoga.

Preparation

One must realize that all the rules and regulations which were enumerated at the beginning of this practice section also apply to all the aspirants who wish to successfully learn and practise kriya yoga.

It is essential that one has developed sensitivity to the positions of the chakras and kshetram by practising the techniques given for the individual chakras (chapters 28 to 34), and also the techniques for integrated chakra awareness (chapter 35). This sensitivity should be such that you can feel them both physically and mentally.

You should also know the position of the two psychic pathways known as *arohan* and *awarohan*. They are explained in the practice called 'Beeja mantra sanchalana' in chapter 35. The following techniques are integral parts of the 20 kriyas:

Name	Chapter
Vipareeta karani asana	33
Ujjayi pranayama	33
Siddhasana/Siddha yoni asana	26
Unmani mudra	35
Khechari mudra	33
Ajapa japa	32
Utthanpadasana	26
Shambhavi mudra	28
Moola bandha	29
Nasikagra Drishti	29
Uddiyana bandha	31
Jalandhara bandha	33
Bhadrasana	26
Padmasana	26
Shanmukhi mudra	34
Vajroli/Sahajoli mudra	30

These practices are all fully described in the chapters indicated and it is essential that you master them. If you try to learn kriya yoga without first of all perfecting them, then you will find the actual kriya techniques very difficult to follow and you will get very little benefit from them.

Mode of learning the kriyas

It is not possible to learn all the kriyas at once. Therefore, we suggest that you learn each kriya sequentially, spending at least one week mastering each kriya, and progressively adding each new kriya to those already learned. That is, in the first week learn and master kriya 1: vipareeta karani mudra. Then in the second week, learn kriya 2: chakra anusandhana, and do both 1 and 2 daily. In the third week, learn kriya 3: nada sanchalana and do it daily, together with the previous two kriyas. In this way, all the kriyas can be systematically and thoroughly learned in a period of 20 weeks. However, it may take many months of regular practice before the kriyas are perfected and remember kundalini kriyas should be practised under guidance.

Length of practice

As you progressively add more and more kriyas to your practice program, the time required for daily practice will increase. Eventually, after mastering all the kriyas, your daily practice of the 20 kriyas, with the required number of rounds, will take between two and two and a half hours.

If you can spare this amount of time every day, then you will get the maximum benefit. However, most people, no matter how sincere, will not be able to devote this length of time to their practice. Therefore, for those who wish to practise kriya yoga, but have less spare time, we suggest that you reduce the number of rounds per kriya as follows:

Srl No	Kriya technique	Full	Reduced
1	Vipareeta karani mudra	21	11
2	Chakra anusandhana	9	9
3	Nada sanchalana	13	5
4	Pawan sanchalana	49	11
5	Shabda sanchalana	59	11
6	Maha mudra	12	6
7	Maha bheda mudra	12	6
8	Manduki kriya	1-3 mins	1-3 mins
9	Tadan kriya	7	7
10	Naumukhi mudra	5	5

11	Shakti chalinid	5	5
12	Shambhavi	11	5
13	Amrit pan	9	9
14	Chakra bhedan	59	11
15	Sushumna darshan	-	-
16	Prana ahuti	1 min	1 min
17	Utthan	2-3 mins	2-3 mins
18	Swaroopa darshan	2-3 mins	2-3 mins
19	Linga sanchalana	2-3 mins	2-3 mins
20	Dhyana	-	-

This daily program containing all the kriyas, with a reduced number of rounds, will take a total of about one to one and a half hours. The benefits may be slightly less than when you do the complete number of rounds per kriya, but still you will reap much fruit from your practise.
While learning each kriya, you should do the full number of rounds; this can be reduced as you integrate the next kriya.

Hints on practice

The following suggestions will help you to master the kriyas and gain maximum benefit:

1. Do not strain physically or mentally under any circumstances, or you may experience negative side effects. This applies particularly in the case of kriyas such as maha mudra, maha bheda mudra, tadan kriya, naumukhi and shakti chalini. Regular daily practice will gradually bring such changes into the mind and body, so that after some time, you will be able to practise the kriyas almost effortlessly.
2. Do not hold your breath for longer than is comfortable. In many of the kriyas, such as maha mudra and maha bheda mudra, most people will initially find difficulty in completing a full round in one respiration cycle without strain or suffocation. In the beginning, it may be necessary to break in the middle of each round, or to take a short rest at the end of each round and take a few normal breaths. As you develop the capacity to hold the breath for longer periods, and to control inhalation and exhalation, this concession may be disregarded.
3. After long inner breath retentions, it is best to breathe in slightly before breathing out. In many of the kriyas, such as maha mudra, maha bheda mudra, naumukhi and shakti chalini, where the breath is held inside for prolonged periods, there is a tendency for the lungs to lock. The best way to overcome this problem and release the lungs is to breathe in slightly before breathing out. This will make the kriyas much easier to do.
4. While learning each kriya, check that you are doing all the steps and that they are being done correctly.

The Kriya Yoga Practices

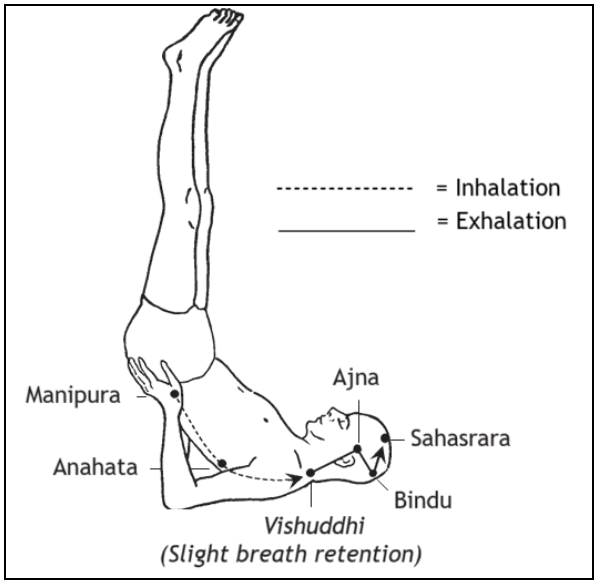
By tradition there are a total of 76 kundalini kriyas of kriya yoga. We present the following 20 main practices, which are sufficient for the daily practice of any sincere sadhaka.
These practices are divided into three groups:

1. those which induce pratyahara
2. those which induce dharana
3. those which induce dhyana

It should be noted that these three states are actually a continuity of evolution, that is, the consciousness flows from one to the next without any apparent dividing point – so these practices should be done in an unbroken sequence. Of course, from the first day, the practice of these kriyas will not necessarily lead to such exalted states of awareness, but if they are practised properly with correct guidance, by an aspirant who is ready for them, then most likely, one day they will. It will be at that stage that the constant, unbroken progression of awareness will become essential. Remember, you should learn one kriya per week.

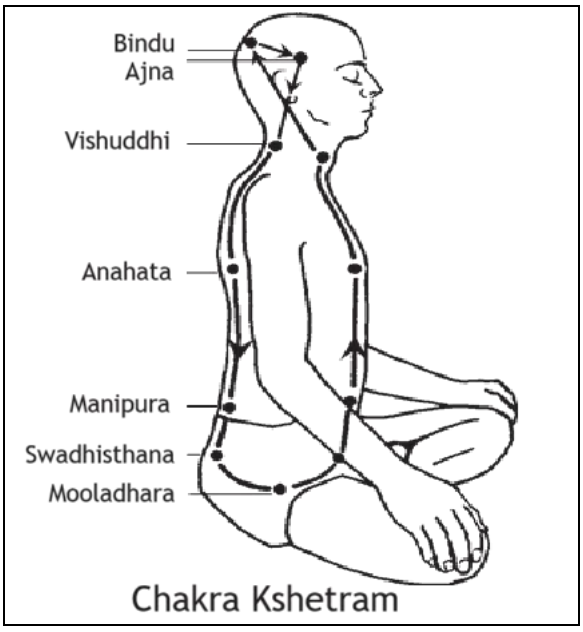
PRATYAHARA PRACTICES

Vipareeta Karani Mudra (the attitude of inversion)



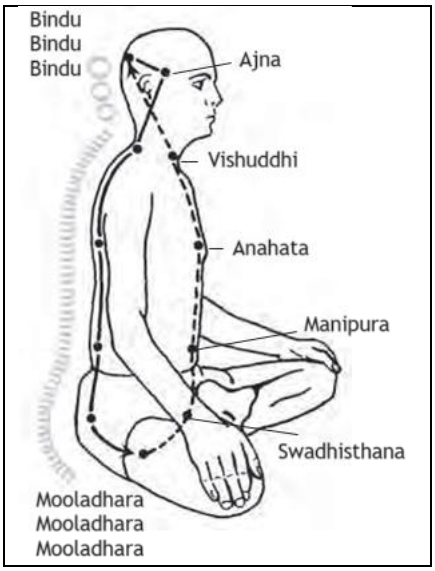
- Assume vipareeta karani asana (described in chapter 33).
- The chin should not touch the chest.
- Practise subtle ujjayi pranayama be sure that the legs are completely vertical.
- Close the eyes.
- Inhale with ujjayi and simultaneously feel a hot stream of amrit or nectar flowing through the spinal passage from manipura chakra to vishuddhi in the throat.
- The nectar will collect at vishuddhi.
- Retain the breath for a few seconds, and be aware of the nectar remaining at vishuddhi and becoming cool.
- Then exhale with ujjayi, sensing the nectar travelling from vishuddhi through ajna, bindu and to sahasrara.
- The sensation is that of the nectar being injected with the help of the breath.
- After exhalation, immediately return your awareness to manipura and repeat the kriya to bring more nectar down to vishuddhi, and finally to sahasrara.
- Practise 21 respirations or rounds.

Chakra Anusandhana (discovery of the chakras)



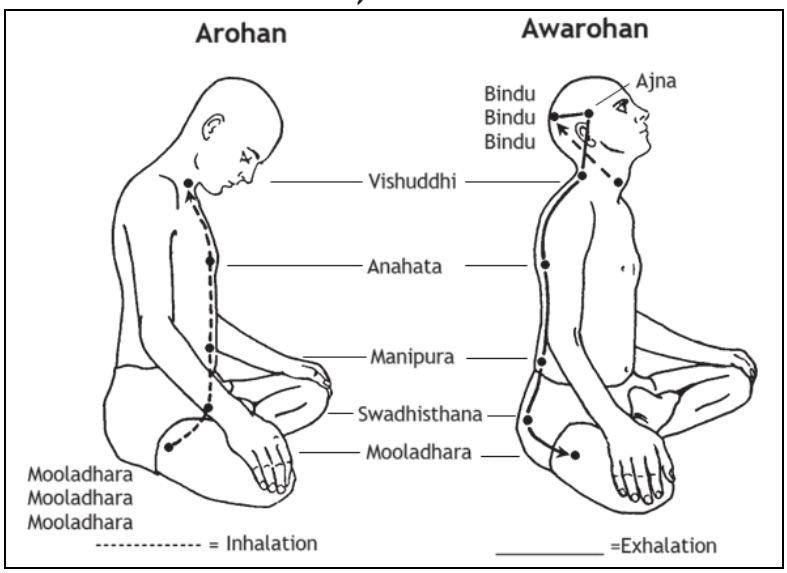
- Assume siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana.
- The eyes remain closed throughout the practice.
- Breathe normally.
- There is no connection between the breath and the consciousness in this practice.
- Bring your awareness to mooladhara chakra.
- Your consciousness will slowly ascend the frontal passage of arohan from mooladhara to the frontal point of swadhisthana at the pubic bone, manipura at the navel, anahata at the sternum, the chest centre, vishuddhi at the throat and across to bindu at the top, back of the head.
- As you travel upward, mentally repeat, 'mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, bindu', as you pass through these centres.
- Then let your awareness slip down the spinal awarohan passage from bindu to mooladhara, mentally repeating 'ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana, mooladhara' as you pass through these centres.
- From mooladhara, immediately start ascending in the frontal passage as before, mentally reciting the chakra names as you ascend, starting with swadhisthana.
- Continue this rotation of awareness through the chakras in a constant flow of rounds.
- Do not make a serious, tense effort to locate the chakras as you pass through them.
- Merely glance at them as you go by, as you would view the scenery from a fast moving train.
- If you wish, you can visualize your awareness in this kriya as a thin silver serpent travelling in an ellipse within your body.
- Practise 9 rounds.

Nada Sanchalana (conducting the sound consciousness)



- Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana. Exhale completely.
- Open the eyes and bend the head forward, so that it drops downward in a relaxed manner.
- The chin should not press tightly on the chest.
- Bring the awareness to mooladhara chakra.
- Repeat mentally, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'.
- Then, as you inhale, your consciousness should rise up through the frontal passage of arohan to bindu.
- Have a clear awareness of swadhisthana, manipura, anahata and vishuddhi, as you pass through them on your way to bindu, and mentally repeat their names.
- As your awareness travels from vishuddhi to bindu during the last segment of your inhalation, your head will slowly rise and tilt back slightly into position facing about 20 degrees above the horizontal.
- With the breath retained inside and the awareness at bindu, mentally repeat, 'bindu, bindu, bindu'.
- The power of the awareness will build up as you are repeating the word 'bindu' and it will explode into the vocal chant of *Om*, which will carry you down through the spinal passage of awarohan to mooladhara.
- The 'O' sound will explode and move downwards, culminating almost in a vibrating m-m-m sound as you approach mooladhara.
- As your awareness descends in the spine, your eyes will gradually close into unmani mudra.
- As you descend through the awarohan passage with the *Om* sound, you should also be aware of ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura and swadhisthana chakras; no mental repetition.
- When you have reached mooladhara, open the eyes and drop the head forward.
- Mentally repeat, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara', with the breath retained outside and start on the ascent as before, with inhalation and repetition of the chakra names as you pass through them.
- Practise 13 full rounds or breaths and end after the last 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'.

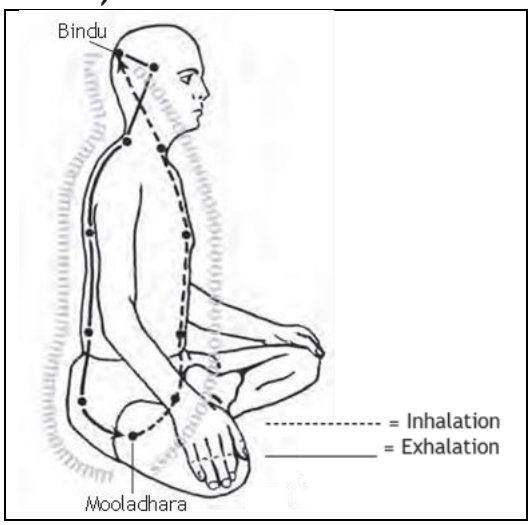
Pawan Sanchalana (conducting the breath consciousness)



- Sit in padmasana, siddhasana or siddha yoni asana, with the eyes closed.
- Practise khechari mudra and ujjayi pranayama throughout this kriya.
- Exhale completely, open the eyes and bend the head forward as in nada sanchalana.
- Become aware of mooladhara chakra and repeat mentally, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'.
- Then mentally say 'arohan' once and begin your ascent through the frontal passage with a subtle ujjayi inhalation.
- As you ascend, be aware of the chakras and as you pass name them mentally.
- As your awareness moves from vishuddhi to bindu, slowly raise your head until it leans backward as in nada sanchalana.
- At bindu mentally repeat, 'bindu, bindu, bindu'.
- Then say 'awarohan' mentally and descend through the spinal passage with ujjayi exhalation, mentally repeating the name of each chakra as you pass through it.
- As you descend, your eyes will close very gradually into unmani mudra, the attitude of drowsiness.
- At mooladhara they will be closed.
- Then open your eyes and bend your head forward.
- Repeat mentally, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'.
- Again begin your ascent with ujjayi inhalation, as before.
- Practise 49 rounds or complete breaths.

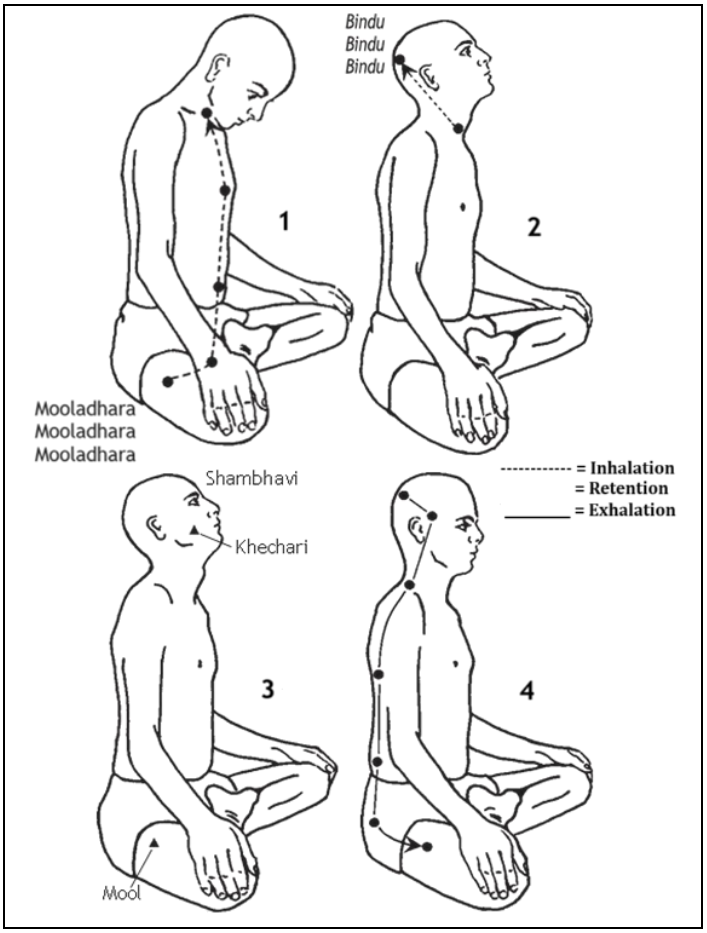
- After the last 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara', open your eyes and end the practice.

Shabda Sanchalana (conducting the word consciousness)



- Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana.
- Practise khechari mudra and ujjayi pranayama throughout the kriya.
- Exhale completely, open the eyes, bend the head forward and become aware of mooladhara chakra for a few seconds.
- Inhale with ujjayi and ascend the frontal passage.
- As you ascend, be aware of the sound of the breath which takes the form of the mantra *So*.
- Simultaneously, be aware of each kshetram, without mental repetition.
- As you travel from vishuddhi to bindu, the head will move upward as in pawan sanchalana and nada sanchalana.
- Then, with the breath retained inside, be aware of bindu for a few seconds.
- Then descend the spinal passage performing unmani mudra and being simultaneously aware of the natural sound of exhalation and the mantra *Ham*.
- Be aware of each chakra without repetition of its name.
- After reaching mooladhara, open the eyes and lower your head.
- Begin your ujjayi inhalation, rising through the frontal passage with the inhalation mantra of *So*.
- Continue in this manner for 59 full rounds or breaths.

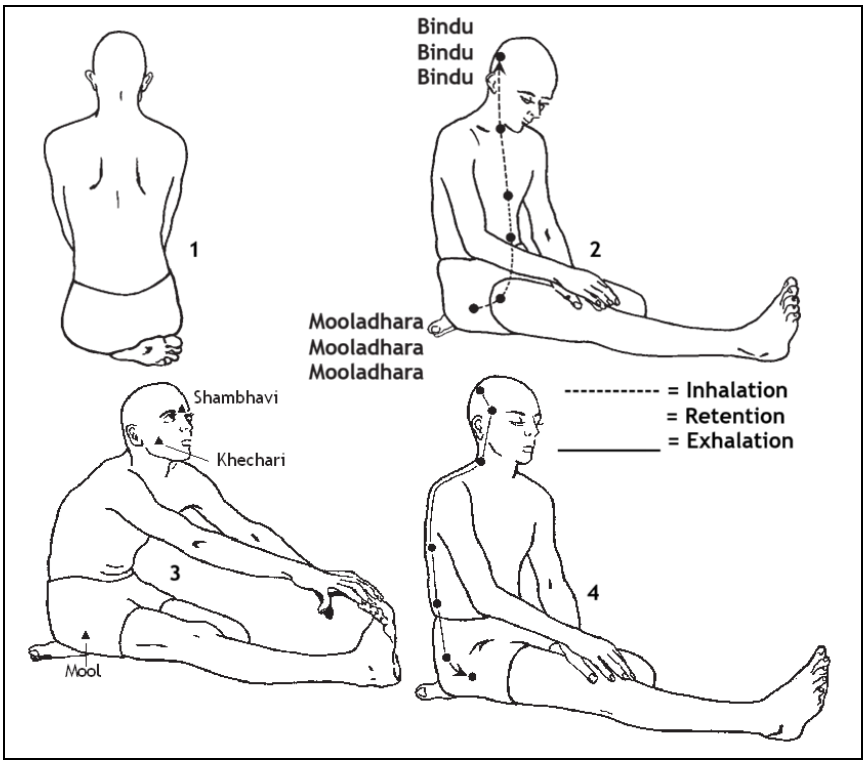
Maha Mudra (great attitude)



- Sit in siddhasana or siddha yoni asana, with the heel of the lower foot pressing firmly in towards mooladhara chakra.
- Practise khechari mudra, exhale completely and bend the head forward.
- Keep the eyes open in the beginning.
- Repeat mentally, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'.
- Ascend through the frontal passage with ujjayi inhalation, being aware of each kshetram as you pass through it.
- Raise your head as you are crossing from vishuddhi to bindu.
- At bindu repeat mentally, 'bindu, bindu, bindu'.
- Practise moola bandha and shambhavi mudra with the breath still retained inside.
- Say to yourself mentally, 'shambhavi-khechari-mool', while shifting your awareness to the centre of these practices.
- When you say 'shambhavi', your awareness should be fixed at the eyebrow centre.
- When you say 'khechari', your awareness should be fixed at the tongue and roof of the mouth.
- When you say 'mool', your awareness should be fixed at mooladhara chakra.
- Beginners should repeat this shifting of awareness 3 times.
- Advanced aspirants can rotate their awareness up to 12 times.
- Then, first release shambhavi mudra, then moola bandha.
- Bring your awareness back to bindu and travel down your spinal passage to mooladhara, with ujjayi exhalation and unmani mudra, and be aware of the chakras as you pass through them.
- On reaching mooladhara, bend the head forward and open the eyes.
- Then repeat, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara' and ascend the frontal passage with ujjayi inhalation,

as before. Practise 12 full rounds or breaths and end after the last 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'.

Alternative practice:

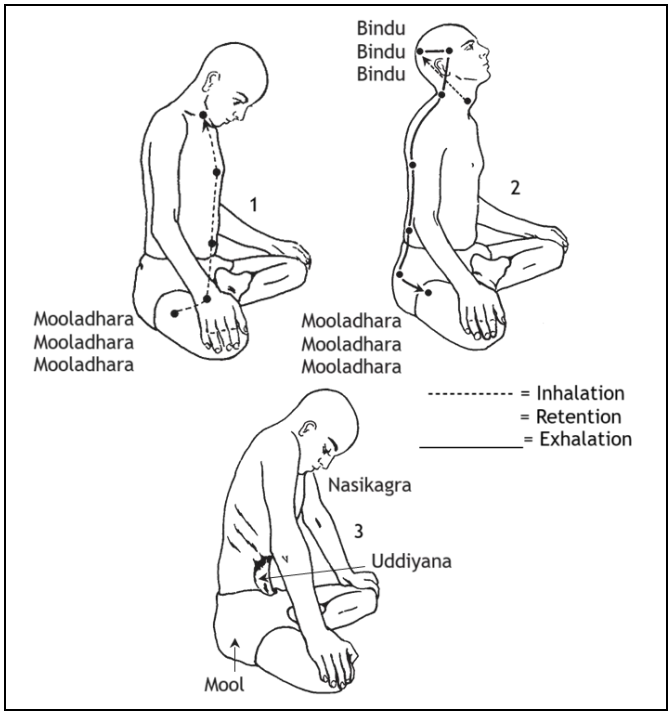


- This kriya can also be practised in utthanpadasana.
- When practising maha mudra in utthanpadasana, a slight change must be made in the technique.
- After ascending to bindu, repeat 'bindu, bindu, bindu'.
- Lean forward and hold the big toe of the extended foot with the fingers of both hands, to form utthanpadasana.
- The stretched knee must not bend.
- Now practise moola bandha and shambhavi mudra. Repeat, 'shambhavi-khechari-mool' from 3 to 12 times, passing your awareness to the locations of these practices as you repeat their names.
- Release shambhavi, then moola bandha, then utthanpadasana.
- Sit upright and place the hands back on the knee.
- Bring your awareness back to bindu, and then descend the spinal passage with ujjayi exhalation and unmani mudra.
- Practise 4 rounds with the right leg stretched forward, 4 rounds with the left leg stretched forward, and 4 rounds with both legs stretched forward.

Practice note: This kriya can either be practised in perfect siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or in utthanpadasana. Both alternatives are equally good, as both apply a firm and constant pressure at mooladhara. If you can easily sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana, then the best method is the first one described. If you cannot sit comfortably in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana, then use the alternative. It is easy to become sleepy while doing kriya yoga and this alternative has an added advantage of helping to remove sleepiness.

The names of the chakras and kshetram can also be repeated mentally as you ascend and descend arohan and awarohan.

Maha Bheda Mudra (great piercing attitude)

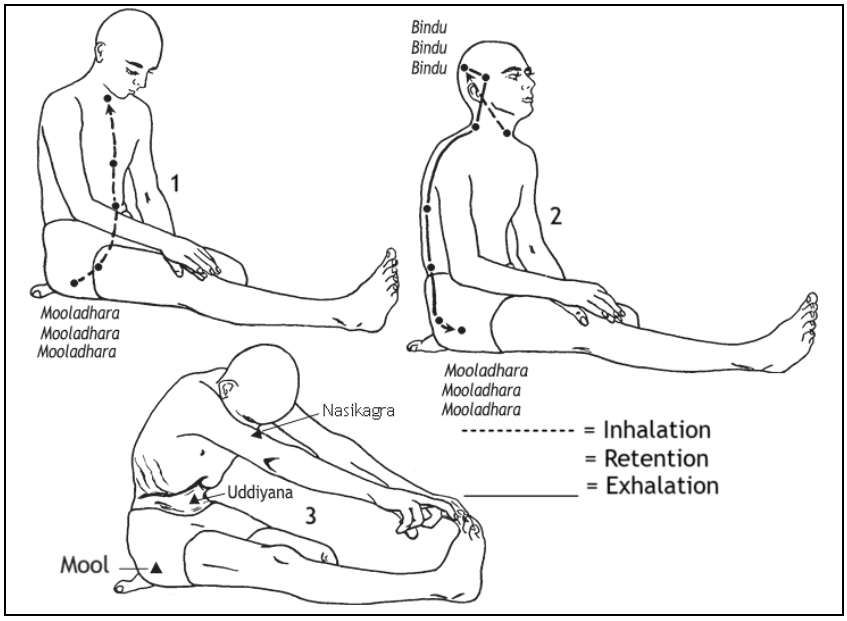


- Sit in siddhasana or siddha yoni asana, with the heel of the lower foot pressing firmly in towards mooladhara chakra.
- Practise khechari mudra and exhale completely, with the eyes open.
- Bend the head forward.
- Repeat mentally, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'.
- Inhale with ujjayi and ascend the frontal passage to bindu.
- As you ascend from vishuddhi to bindu, raise your head.
- Repeat mentally, 'bindu, bindu, bindu', and then descend the spinal passage to mooladhara with ujjayi exhalation and unmani mudra.
- Be sure to notice the chakras as you pass through them.
- Then practise jalandhara bandha with the breath retained outside.
- Practise nasikagra drishti, uddiyana bandha and

moola bandha.

- Repeat mentally, 'nasikagra-uddiyana-mool', while simultaneously placing your awareness at the seats of these practices in turn.
- Repeat this cycle of awareness 3 times if you are a beginner, or up to 12 times if you are experienced.
- Then release nasikagra drishti, moola bandha, uddiyana bandha and jalandhara bandha, but keep the head down.
- Bring your awareness back to mooladhara.
- Repeat the mantra 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara', mentally.
- Then with ujjayi inhalation, ascend the frontal passage to bindu for the next round.
- Practise 12 full rounds or breaths.

Alternative practice:



- This kriya can also be practised in utthanpadasana, as with maha mudra.
- Place the hands on the bent knee, exhale completely and bend the head forward, keeping the eyes open.
- Repeat mentally, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'.
- Inhale with ujjayi through the frontal passage from mooladhara to bindu, raising your head while moving from vishuddhi to bindu.
- Repeat, 'bindu, bindu, bindu', and then exhale with ujjayi down the spinal passage, doing unmani mudra and being aware of each chakra en route.
- Hold the breath outside and bend forward to grasp the big toe of the extended foot to form utthanpadasana. Press the chin against the chest to form jalandhara bandha.
- Practise nasikagra drishti, uddiyana bandha and moola bandha, while still retaining the breath outside.
- Repeat mentally, 'nasikagra-uddiyana-mool', while placing the awareness at the locations of these practices in turn.
- Repeat this cycle of awareness 3 times if you are a beginner, or up to 12 times if you are experienced.
- Release nasikagra drishti, moola bandha and uddiyana bandha.
- Bring your hands to your knees and sit up straight. Release jalandhara but keep your head bent down.
- Bring your awareness back to mooladhara. Repeat the mantra 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara', and then ascend the frontal passage with ujjayi inhalation.
- Practise in this way for 4 full rounds or breaths with the right leg extended, then practise 4 times with the left leg extended, and finally 4 times with both legs extended.
- After the fourth time in each position, ascend once to bindu with ujjayi inhalation. Repeat the bindu mantra, descend to mooladhara and repeat its mantra, relax, then change legs.
- The rotation of awareness through nasikagra, uddiyana and mool is done with outside retention of the breath at mooladhara.
- You are advised to practise only 3 rotations at first, slowly increasing by one rotation per week until you can complete 12 rotations.

Practice note: Make sure that all the bandhas are performed correctly and in the right sequence. At first you will have to pay special attention to this, but with regular practice the bandhas will lock and tighten automatically, without effort and at the right stage of the kriya.

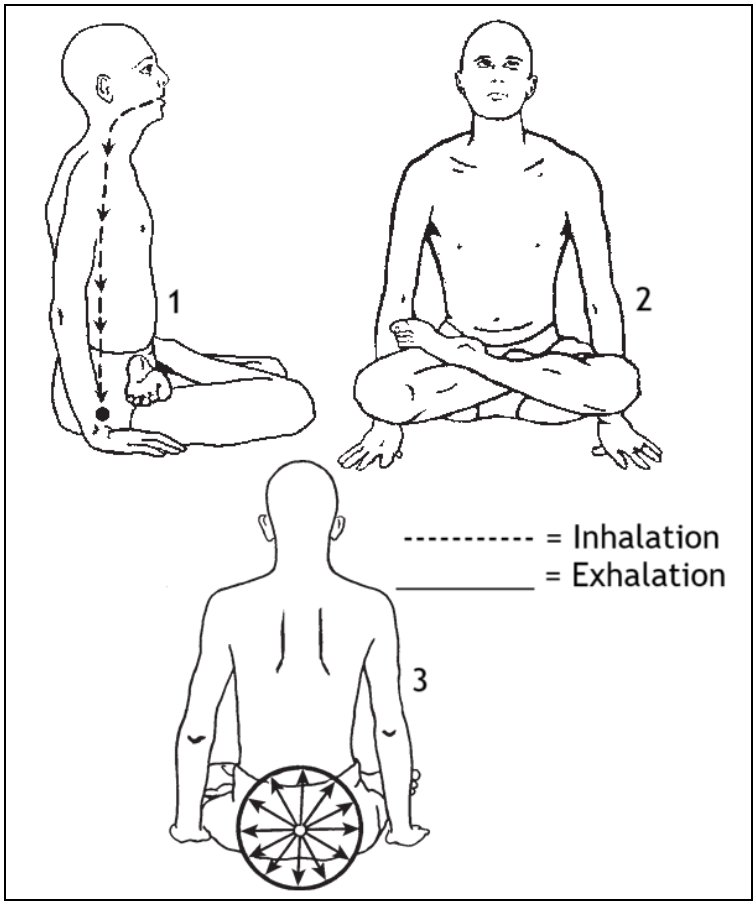
Nose tip gazing helps to tighten the lock of the bandhas. Make sure that nasikagra drishti and the bandhas are practised simultaneously and that you do not omit any of them while rotating awareness through the centres. Do not strain. If you are feeling pain or discomfort in the eyes, stop nasikagra drishti but continue the bandhas and rotation of awareness. Slowly increase duration of nasikagra as the eye muscles adapt to the practice.

You can repeat the 'mooladhara' mantra 3 times before applying the bandhas as well as repeating 'mooladhara' 3 times at the beginning of a new round.
The names of the chakras and kshetrams can be mentally repeated as you ascend and descend arohan and awarohan passages.

Manduki Mudra (frog attitude)

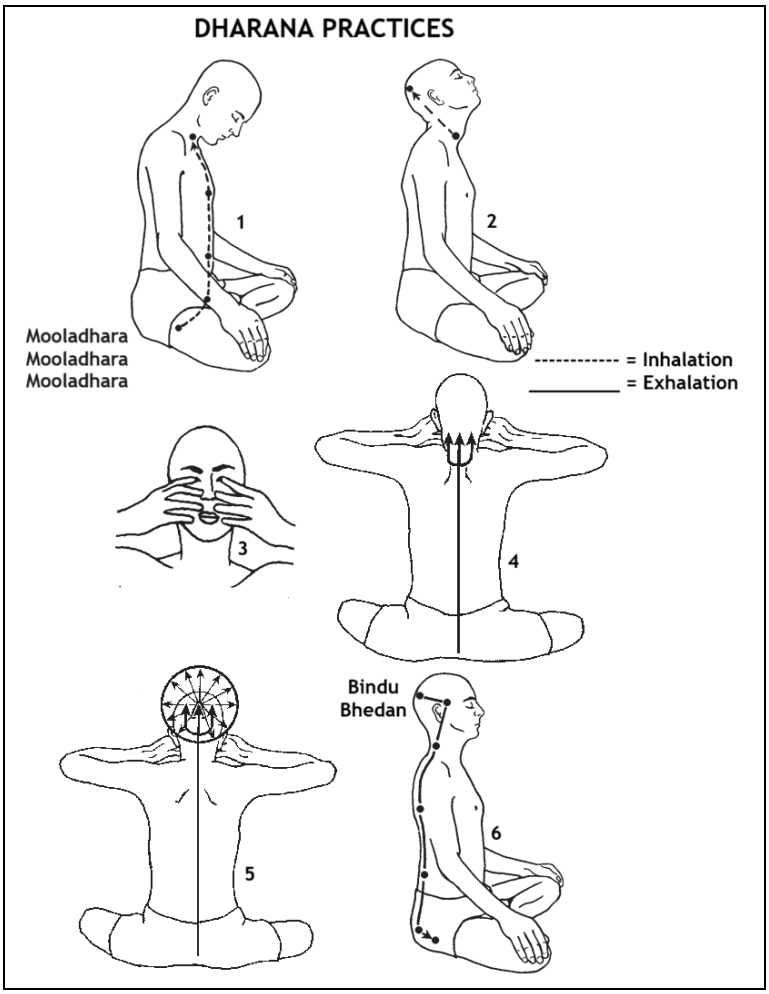
- Sit in bhadrasana.
- The eyes should remain open.
- The area of the body below mooladhara chakra must touch the floor.
- If necessary place a cushion under the buttocks to apply firm pressure to this point.
- Place the hands on the knees and practise nasikagra drishti.
- Become aware of the natural breath flowing in and out of the nostrils.
- With inhalation, the breath flows through both nostrils and merges at the eyebrow centre.
- As you exhale, the two flows diverge from the eyebrow centre and move out through both nostrils.
- The breath follows a conical or inverted V-shaped pathway. Feel this.
- Simultaneously, be aware of all smells.
- The point of this kriya is to smell the aroma of the astral body which has a scent like that of sandalwood.
- If your eyes become tired, close them for a while and then resume nasikagra drishti.
- Practise this kriya until it becomes intoxicating.
- Do not carry it so far that you become totally absorbed in it and do not wish to end the practice.

Tadan Kriya (beating the kundalini)



- Sit in padmasana with the eyes open.
- Place the palms on the floor at the sides of the body, next to the hips, with the fingers pointing forward.
- Tilt the head slightly backward and practise shambhavi mudra.
- Inhale through the mouth in audible ujjayi pranayama.
- As you inhale, feel the breath travelling downward through a tube connecting the mouth to mooladhara chakra.
- The breath will collect at mooladhara chakra.
- Hold the breath in, keep your awareness at mooladhara and practise moola bandha.
- Using your hands, lift your body off the ground.
- Then drop your body lightly so that mooladhara is gently beaten.
- Repeat this beating 3 times.
- Do not practise this quickly or harshly.
- After the third beating, exhale gently through the nose with ujjayi pranayama.
- The breath will seem to diffuse in all direction from its storehouse at mooladhara.
- Practise this kriya a total of 7 times.
- The number of beatings practised per round can be gradually increased from 3 to a maximum of 11.

Naumukhi Mudra (closing the nine gates)

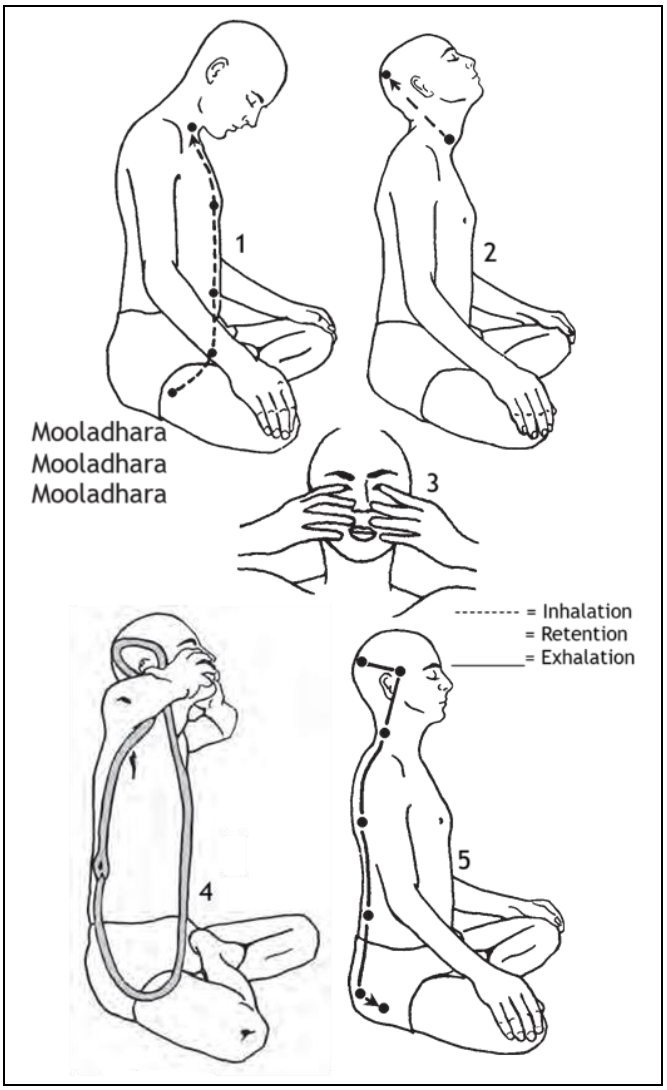


- Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana.
- The eyes should remain closed throughout.
- If necessary, use a cushion to ensure mooladhara is compressed.
- Perform khechari mudra and bend the head slightly forward (not jalandhara bandha).
- Repeat mentally, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'.
- Then inhale with ujjayi up the frontal passage to bindu.
- Raise your head as you pass from vishuddhi to bindu.
- Practise shanmukhi mudra by closing your ears with the thumbs, the eyes with both forefingers, the nostrils with your middle fingers, the upper lip with the ring fingers and your lower lip with the small fingers (do not apply too much pressure).
- Practise moola bandha and vajroli/sahajoli mudra.
- The nine gates of the body are now closed (eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, anus and sexual organ).
- Become aware of the spinal passage and bindu.
- Now visualize a shining copper trident (trishul), rooted in mooladhara with its stem in the spinal cord and the prongs extending upward from vishuddhi.
- The prongs are very sharp.
- The trishul will slightly rise a number of times of its own accord and it will pierce bindu with its central prong.
- As it pierces bindu, repeat the mantra 'bindu bhedan', which means 'bindu piercing'.
- After some time, release vajroli/sahajoli mudra and moola bandha.
- Open the upper gates and bring your hands down to your knees.
- Exhale with ujjayi down the spinal passage from bindu to mooladhara. Mentally repeat 'mooladhara' 3 times.
- Then inhale up the frontal passage to bindu to repeat the kriya.
- Practise 5 full rounds or breaths, and after the fifth round, end the practice after exhalation.

Practice note: It is extremely important that the back be held perfectly straight throughout this kriya. If not, the sensation that follows the piercing of bindu may not be perceived. When vajroli/sahajoli mudra is correctly performed it will also heighten the sensation experienced during this practice. When vajroli/sahajoli mudra is perfected, the contraction of vajra nadi can be achieved without contracting the anal sphincter muscles. The sensation can be compared to an electric current running the full length of vajra nadi to the brain. Try to sensitize your awareness to the point where you actually feel the piercing of bindu like an electric shock.

As you ascend and descend arohan and awarohan, you can mentally repeat the names of the chakras and kshetram if you wish.

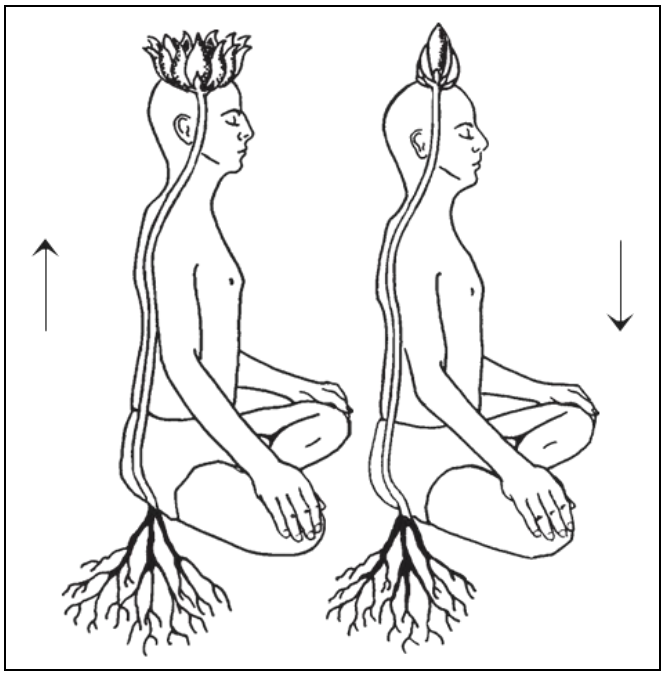
Shakti Chalini (conduction of the thought force)



- Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana.
- The eyes should remain closed throughout.
- Practise khechari mudra. Exhale completely, bend the head forward and bring the awareness to mooladhara.
- Repeat mentally, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara', and then ascend the frontal passage to bindu with ujjayi inhalation, raising your head as you approach bindu.
- Retain the breath inside, and then practise shanmukhi mudra, closing the ears, eyes, nostrils and lips with the fingers.
- Allow your awareness to rotate in a continuous cycle, descending the spinal passage to mooladhara and rising up the frontal passage to bindu in an unbroken loop, while you keep the breath retained inside.
- Visualize a thin green snake moving through the psychic passageways.
- The tail of this serpent is at bindu, and the body extends down through mooladhara and up the frontal passage.
- The head is also at bindu, with the mouth biting the end of the tail.
- If you watch this snake, it will start to move in a circle in the psychic passages, or it may even go off this track and follow a new one of its own.
- Just watch this snake, whatever it does.
- When your retention of breath is becoming exhausted, release shanmukhi mudra, return the hands to the knees and bring your awareness to bindu.
- Then descend to mooladhara through the spinal passage with ujjayi exhalation.
- At mooladhara, lower your head, repeat 'mooladhara' 3 times, and ascend the frontal passage.
- Practise this kriya 5 times without a break, or for the duration of 5 breaths.

Practice note: Vajroli/sahajoli mudra and moola bandha can also be performed simultaneously with Yogi Mudra.

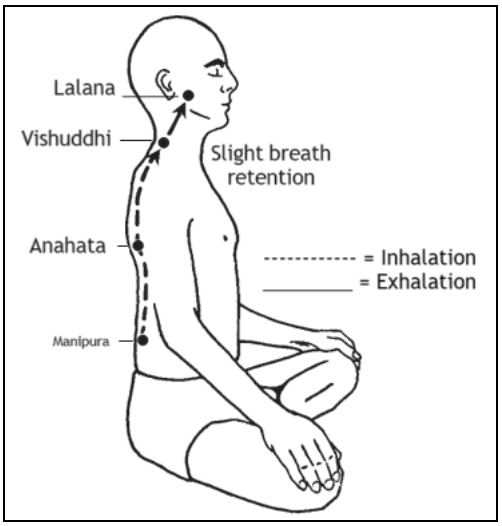
Shambhavi (Parvati's lotus)



- Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana.
- Close your eyes and practise khechari mudra.
- Visualize a lotus flower with a long thin stem extending downward.
- The roots of the lotus are white or transparent green.
- They spread out from mooladhara chakra.
- The thin green lotus stem is in your spinal passage.
- The lotus flower is at sahasrara, and it is closed like a bud.
- At the bottom of the bud are a few light green immature petals.
- The main petals of the flower are pink with fine red veins.
- Try to see this lotus clearly.
- You visualize it in chidakasha, but you feel it in your body.
- Exhale and take your awareness to the root of the lotus at mooladhara.

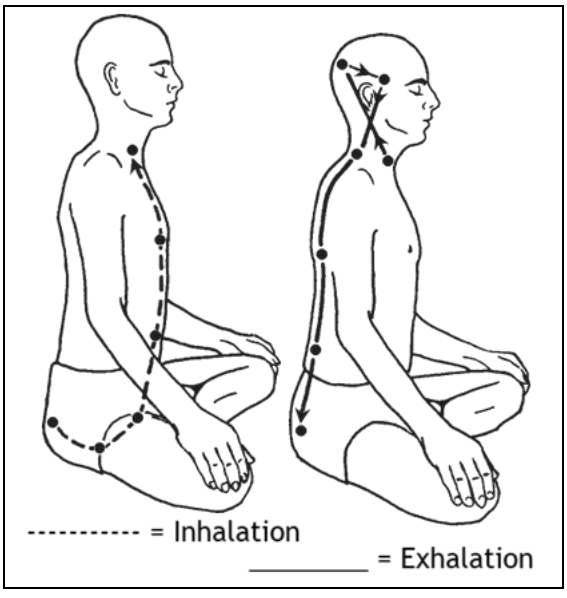
- Inhale with ujjayi pranayama and allow your awareness to rise slowly through the centre of the lotus stem, within the spinal passage.
- At the end of inhalation, you will reach the closed bud at the top of the stem.
- Your ascent will be like that of a caterpillar, climbing up inside a thin stem.
- Hold your awareness at sahasrara with the breath retained inside.
- You are inside the lotus, but you can also see it from outside.
- It will begin to open very slowly.
- As the bud opens out into a beautiful lotus flower, you will see the yellow pollen-tipped stamens in its centre.
- It will slowly close again, to open again almost immediately.
- After the lotus has stopped opening and closing, and it remains sealed, then slowly descend through the stem to mooladhara, drifting down on the wave of your ujjayi exhalation.
- Remain at mooladhara for a few seconds, visualizing the roots spreading out in all directions.
- Then once again, ascend the stem with ujjayi inhalation.
- Ascend and descend 11 times, and then end this kriya.

Amrit Pan (the quaffing of nectar)



- Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana.
- Keep the eyes closed throughout and practise khechari mudra.
- Bring your awareness to manipura chakra, where there is a storehouse of a warm, sweet liquid.
- Exhale fully with ujjayi.
- Inhale with ujjayi, drawing a quantity of this liquid up to vishuddhi chakra through the spinal passage with the suction power of your breath.
- Remain at vishuddhi for a few seconds.
- The nectar that you have raised from manipura will become icy cold at vishuddhi.
- Then with ujjayi, exhale up to lalana chakra (at the back of the soft palate), through the nectar passage.
- Blow the cool nectar up to lalana with the breath.
- The breath will immediately disperse by itself once you have reached lalana.
- Immediately return your awareness to manipura chakra.
- With another ujjayi inhalation, continue the upward transfer of liquid.
- Practise 9 times in all.

Chakra Bhedan (piercing the chakras)



- Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana.
- Keep your eyes closed throughout.
- Practise khechari mudra and ujjayi pranayama.
- Breathe without any break between inhalation and exhalation.
- Exhale, and bring your awareness down to swadhisthana chakra at the base of the spine.
- Inhale and direct your consciousness first to mooladhara and then up the frontal passage.
- At about the level of vishuddhi kshetram, the breath will run out and you will immediately start exhalation.
- Exhale from vishuddhi kshetram to bindu and then down the spine from ajna to swadhisthana chakra to complete one round.
- This kriya should actually be practised for 59 rounds, but if introversion starts to occur before you have completed the rounds, discontinue the practice and go on to the next kriya.

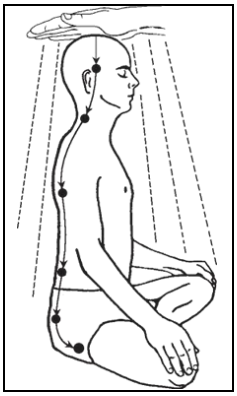
Practice note: If desired, mental repetition of the chakra and kshetram can also be performed.

Sushumna Darshan (inner visualization of the chakras)

For chakra visualization refer to the diagrams of each chakra.

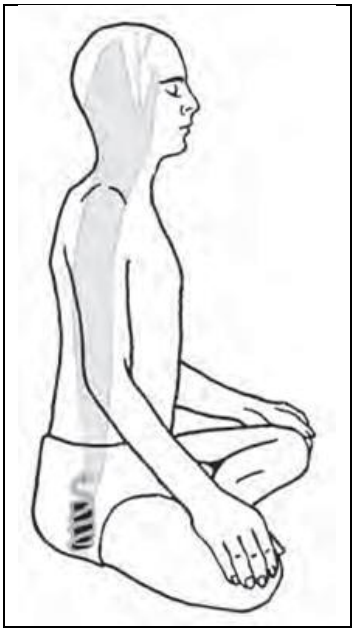
- Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana.
- Close the eyes and breathe normally.
- There is no relation between the breath and awareness in this kriya.
- Bring the awareness to mooladhara. Imagine a pencil, and with that pencil draw a square at mooladhara.
- Draw the largest possible inverted equilateral triangle within that square.
- Then make a circle touching all the four corners of that square.
- Prepare four petals, one for each side of the square.
- Bring your awareness to swadhisthana. Prepare a circle there with the same radius as the one at mooladhara.
- Draw six petals around the edge of the circle, and a crescent moon inside the bottom of the circle.
- Now come to manipura.
- Draw a circle, and then make the biggest possible inverted triangle to fit this circle.
- In the centre draw a ball of fire.
- Make ten petals around the circle.
- Raise the consciousness to anahata.
- Draw two triangles there, one triangle pointed upward and the other inverted.
- They are interlaced, both crossing each other.
- Surround them by by a circle with twelve petals.
- Then come to vishuddhi.
- Draw a circle, and place a smaller circle within the circle, like a drop of nectar.
- Make sixteen petals around that circle.
- Move up to ajna.
- Make a circle and inside it write a big Sanskrit æ.
- Prepare two large petals, one on the right and one on the left side of the circle.
- At bindu draw a crescent moon with a very tiny circle above it.
- Reach sahasrara. Prepare a circle there, and make the largest possible upward pointing triangle within that circle.
- There are 1000 petals all around the circle.
- Try to see at one glance all the chakras in their proper places.
- If it is very difficult to see them all together, then see only two chakras on the first day and add one more to your visualization each day until all appear together.

Prana Ahuti (infusing the divine prana)



- Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana.
- Close the eyes and breathe normally.
- Feel the soft touch of a divine hand lying on your head.
- The hand is infusing subtle prana into your body and mind and the prana is travelling down from sahasrara through the spinal passage.
- You may experience it as a wave of cold, heat energy, electric current, or as a stream of wind or liquid.
- Its passage will result in vibrations, shocks, jerks or ticking sensations which course through you.
- When the prana has reached mooladhara, then immediately go on to the next kriya without waiting to experience the prana a second time.

Utthan (raising the kundalini)

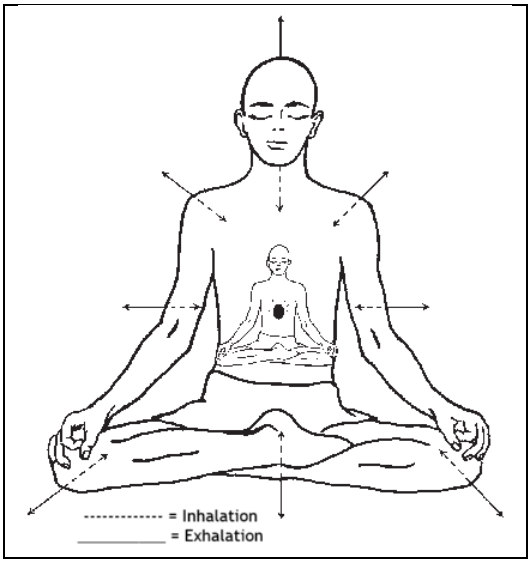


- Sit in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana.
- Keep the eyes closed throughout and breathe normally.
- Bring your awareness to mooladhara chakra.
- Try to visualize it clearly and notice all details.
- You will see a black shivalingam made of a smoky gaseous substance.
- The bottom and top of the lingam are cut off, and circled around it is a red baby snake.
- This red baby snake is trying to uncoil itself so it can move upward through sushumna.
- As it struggles to release itself and ascends, it makes an angry hissing sound.
- The tail of the snake will remain fixed at the bottom of the shivalingam, but the head and body may move upward and come back down again.
- Sometimes both the shivalingam and the snake may shift their position in the body, so you may even visualize them for a time at ajna or sahasrara.
- The head of the snake is very wide, having the same breadth as your body, but it is not a cobra.
- After some time, you may feel your body contract.
- This will be followed by a sensation of bliss.
- When this occurs go on to the next kriya.

Swaroopa Darshan (the vision of your Self)

- Remain sitting in siddhasana/siddha yoni asana or padmasana and do not open the eyes.
- Become aware of the physical body.
- Your body is completely motionless, and you maintain total awareness of this fact.
- Be sure that you are completely steady, like a rock.
- When you are absolutely sure of your bodily steadiness, you should also become aware of your natural breath.
- Watch the constant flow of your breath, but be sure your body remains steady.
- Your body will start to become stiff.
- As it becomes stiffer, your awareness will shift completely to your breathing; however, the body will continue to become stiffer and stiffer of its own accord.
- When your body has become as rigid as a stone, and it is beyond your control to move it even if you tried, then go on to the next kriya.

Linga Sanchalana (astral conduction)



- Remain still in your stiffened asana with the eyes closed.
- Due to the stiffness of your body, your breathing will have automatically become ujjayi breathing, and khechari mudra will have been formed.
- Be totally aware of your breathing.
- You will notice that with each inhalation your body seems to be expanding, and with each exhalation your body appears to be contracting.
- It is peculiar though, because your physical body is not moving; it is still and as stiff as a statue.
- It is your astral body that you experience expanding and contracting.
- As you observe this contraction and expansion process, it will gradually become more and more pronounced.
- After some time you will begin to lose awareness of the physical body, and you will only be observing the astral body directly.
- However, the degree of contraction will become more pronounced.
- Eventually you will reach a stage where, on contraction, the astral body reduces to a single point of light.
- When this occurs, discontinue the kriya immediately and go on to the next.

DHYANA PRACTICE

Dhyana (meditation)

- You have realized your astral body as a single point of light.
- Now look closer at that point of light and you will see it take the form of a golden egg.
- As you watch this golden egg, it will begin to expand.
- The golden egg is luminous and glowing intensely; however, it does not give off any rays of light.
- As the golden egg becomes larger, it will begin to take on the same shape as that of your astral and physical bodies.
- This form, however, is not a material or even a subtle form.
- This form is glowing light. It is your causal self.

Kundalini Research

Compiled by
Dr Swami Shankardevananda Saraswati MBBS (Syd)

Introduction

We have seen time and again that the words and teachings of many of the yogis, saints and sages from all ages have been recently verified by modern science. It has been our function to fit together the bits and pieces of research and to point out:

1. The overlap between modern science and yoga,
2. How the various pieces fit together to give us an expanded concept of man,
3. What directions research can take in order to design and analyze research in the light of yogic psychophysiology.

One of the great traps in attempting to research yoga is to design experiments without a thorough knowledge of yoga itself. This is like looking at only a small part of the whole, just as the six blind 'wise' men, who each examined a different part of an elephant and then pronounced their judgements based on these limitations, could never understand the whole elephant and how it looked. Yogic training requires many years and the skilled guidance of a master to discover its basic principles, its mode of application, and to prepare oneself for the experiences arising from this training.

The totality of man

Perhaps the outstanding feature of yoga is its ability to give us a more total picture of who we are, to put the various elements into a simpler and at the same time more sophisticated and more expanded perspective. Yoga also teaches us that within us all there is a vital power, a basic essence, whose thread can be seen running through life, unmeasurable by even the most sophisticated machines, but palpable and motivating our living, breathing, thinking, body and mind. We can see its effects and measure the forms and changes of this subtle energy as it enters and interacts with the physical domain, in the nerves, in the chemical and intracellular processes and in the flows and pressures of the body. However, the energy itself is still undefined scientifically.

Through yogic sadhana we can experience the subtle energy, called prana or kundalini, which underlies all matter. This experience is a transformative one, which makes the subtle more tangible and real than the material and so-called solid, physical universe. It shifts our perspective, broadens our awareness and awakens our consciousness, our higher and greater self. It awakens us to the fact that within us all is an immortal and eternal essence, full of knowledge, bliss and truth.

The very fact that such an experience exists alters our direction and purpose. We see that we are here not only for sensual and mundane satisfaction, but for a higher and greater destiny. This ultimate goal of yoga must always be remembered when we are researching yoga, for we know that yoga can give us relaxation, alter our brain waves and hormonal secretions, endow us with health, induce concentration and better memory, help us to develop better human interrelationships and to enjoy everything we do, to have fun and fulfil ourselves in a balanced, healthy way. However, we must see that these things, though they are all worthy and good in themselves, are not the ultimate goal of yoga, but are side-effects of our pursuit of higher awareness and deeper knowledge of the truth of our existence. To pursue these things in themselves is another trap, a trick of the mind. For they do not exist by themselves but are the outcome of a complete process of living. The yogic process of total development of body, mind and spirit, ida, pingala and sushumna, is the most systematic way to attain these things and more.

Yoga is not a science of healing and does not need to look into the negative side of existence. The teachings tell us to practise and emphasize the good, positive and healthy in us and automatically we will be healthy and happy. There is nothing difficult to understand in this. If we emphasize exercise, moderation, good lifestyle, relaxation, meditation and self-discipline, then we are sure to achieve something worthwhile in life. Research into relaxation, meditation, asana and pranayama continues to demonstrate that yoga exerts real changes in the body and mind, that it can only be a worthwhile addition to our lives if performed under guidance and done correctly. However, we must remember that it is much more than that, and that all our achievements are ultimately, and in the last analysis, useless if we do not transform the quality of our awareness.

Yoga tells us to awaken our minds, to develop the energy within ourselves so that we can attain a much greater, fuller and more total existence. Evidence is piling up to show that there is a psychic side to our lives, that the mental and intangible is far from imaginary, but is powered by an energy, a subtle force which can be tapped and developed and which can totally change and transform the more physical side of our lives. There is also evidence

that awareness and consciousness can be independent from the body and this is coming from studies into physics and the nature of energy in our universe.

Purpose of this section

In this section we are more concerned with delineating the research into energy than into consciousness. We are concerned with the research into kundalini rather than with the awareness side of things. We must take it for granted that awareness exists. Research into the energy side of yoga shows us that there is a physically based energy in the body which also has a psychic dimension. This fits the yogic description of prana, whose ultimate and maximum form is that of kundalini.

Many times we have been amazed to hear the stories of yogis and saints and have been awed by reading the ancient and universal teachings of yoga, to realize that they are applicable even today. Often we have wondered how yogis developed this science in the first place. Obviously it has come from a profound and unusual experience, beyond the capacity of the normal person to achieve or even understand without practising yoga.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati is one of those who has reached transcendental heights and come back to tell us about kundalini in scientific terms. He has spoken about the kundalini phenomenon and has laid down the fundamentals of kundalini yoga in a succinct, precise, profound and yet easily understandable and systematic manner, as has been done in this book. He has told us many things about the functions of the body, for example, that the right nostril connects to the left brain, and the left nostril to the right brain, which, in 1983, was verified by researchers at the Salk Institute in America (see chapter 42). Through his own internal experiences he has seen that most of us do not use our potential and that within the brain there are unused areas of potential energy, psychic awareness and total knowledge. It is actually possible to experience the brain from inside. The source is within us, however, we have not connected the various centres and circuits to the main switches and the main generator. The way to do this, Swami Satyananda tells us, is through kundalini yoga.

Often Swami Satyananda has referred to the works of researchers as a means of validating and expressing the kundalini experience in easily understandable scientific terms, and to show that there are many people working on this most important aspect of life. Much of their research is outlined here in simple terms. This research represents pioneering efforts to delineate the broader function of man. No doubt, in the future, new machines and methods will have to be developed, for we are seeing only the bare beginnings of yogic research at this time. However, the efforts of these researchers will be remembered and will set the course for more sophisticated, scientifically acceptable research.

One thing is sure, science and yoga have been running parallel and in the same direction and are now beginning to converge towards a meeting point which promises to transform society. The concept of kundalini and the higher sciences is becoming more widely known and respected and more and more people are taking up its practice. This book and this section are an offering to help you to see kundalini in a more total and easily understood manner, to give researchers guidelines and perspective, and to help you achieve the kundalini experience as a reality in your life.

Kundalini, Fact not Fiction

As one opens the door with a key, so the yogi should open the gate to liberation with the kundalini. The great goddess sleeps, closing with her mouth, the opening through which one can ascend to the brahmarandhra . . . to that place where there is neither pain nor suffering. The kundalini sleeps above the kanda . . . she gives liberation to the yogi and bondage to the fool. He who knows kundalini, knows yoga. The kundalini, it is said, is coiled like a serpent. He who can induce her to move is liberated.

—*Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (ch. 3, v. 105–111)

With our present limited state of consciousness, bound by sense experiences which become dull and monotonous through endless repetition, and unable to break out of our tensions, problems and anxieties, modern man is facing both a material and spiritual crisis. This crisis is a two-edged sword. Kundalini both binds and liberates. On the one hand it is 'bad', for it creates anxiety and depression and has precipitated a plague of psychosomatic disease and suffering unparalleled in former times. On the other hand, it is 'good', a blessing in disguise which is forcing us to change and grow, to evolve ourselves at individual and social levels.

We are witnessing a tremendous upsurge of interest in yoga, meditation and spiritual values. There has been a revival of the yogic lifestyle and knowledge. Yoga and related sciences are now recognized as valuable tools within the healing profession and have added tremendous depth and height, a new dimension to psychology and philosophy. Scientists have been inspired to probe deeper into the mysteries of yoga, to investigate the means by which it works and to make the teachings of the ancient rishis and yogis more readily understood and expressed in modern scientific terminology. We are seeing that science is not actually discovering anything new, but is substantiating the ancient knowledge of the yogis.

Scientific investigation into yoga and the allied sciences has made this knowledge more accessible by incorporating it into a whole new set of therapeutic techniques and new methods to develop our potential, for example, biofeedback, autogenic training, mind control techniques, psychic healing, and a myriad of other similar processes. New branches of medicine have come into being, and the recognition of mind, begun by Freud in the early part of the twentieth century, has finally filtered down into common acceptance. Stress medicine and psychosomatic medicine are examples of our deeper understanding of this interaction of energy, mind and body, an understanding developed through our rediscovery of yoga.

In an effort to penetrate the mysteries of prana shakti, the physical side of psychic energy, and chitta, the mental side of psychic energy, a few respected and eminent pioneers, honouring the rigorous demands of the scientific method, have accumulated a solid core of evidence which explains in scientific terms the phenomenon of psychic energy and validates the teachings of yogis. Science has substantiated the yogic knowledge that a subtle energy exists which is body-based and has both physical and psychic properties. This energy, which powers our awareness and transforms and expands our conscious dimensions, is not just a myth or idea; it is not a metaphysical concept, but a fact. Kundalini is defined as the ultimate, most intense form of this energy, which lies dormant within each and every one of us.

Parapsychology

Phenomena such as telepathy, psychic healing, psychokinesis (the moving of matter by mind power), dowsing, telegnosis (psychic reading of history and association of objects), and other paranormal events, are receiving serious attention from the more pioneering members of the international science community as a means of understanding the relationship of energy and consciousness.

Scientists in the USA, UK, Germany, Holland, Scandinavia and Australia have taken the lead from scientists of the Soviet Union, many of whom are financed by their governments. Called bioelectronics or paraphysics in some circles, this field of study is generally known as *parapsychology.*

In Czechoslovakia it is known as *psychotronics,* and one of the leading Czech researchers in this field is Dr Zdenek Rejdak, whose association with Swami Satyananda began in the early 1970s when he stayed at the Bihar School of Yoga. Speaking in Japan at the fifth annual conference of the International Association for Religion and Parapsychology in 1976, Dr Rejdak defined psychotronics, and therefore, the whole field of parapsychology as: "The science which, in an interdisciplinary fashion, studies the distant interactions between living organisms and their environment, internal and external, and the energetic processes underlying these manifestations in order to supplement and widen man's understanding of the laws of nature."

Psychic energy

Psychic energy has been found to affect a whole range of laboratory equipment, from voltmeters to Geiger counters to magnetometers. Yet this does not mean that psychic energy is electrical, magnetic or radioactive. Rather, it seems to both encompass and go beyond these properties. Most researchers agree with the Russians who state that psychic energy may have its origin in electrical activity, but the nature of the energy is entirely different. However, yogis state that prana is the substratum of our material universe, interpenetrating and organizing all matter and being the common ground for all energy. They see prana from a different and higher perspective.

It is also generally accepted by scientists that psychic energy, most widely known as *bioenergy*, is body-based and affects both the physical and mental spheres as indicated by yogis. It has also been measured as a force field surrounding the body up to a distance of twelve feet by Yale neuropsychiatrist, Dr Leonard Ravitz.[1] This seems to support the yogic concept of the subtle pranic body which interpenetrates and is interdependent with the physical structure, motivating it to function.

There is considerable support for this hypothesis, gathered from the monitoring of the physiological changes experienced by psychics during laboratory tests of paranormal events. For instance, as part of his usual experimental procedure, Dr Grenady Sergeyev of the A.A. Utkomskii Physiological Institute (a Leningrad military laboratory), took readings of the brain waves, heartbeat and pulse rates of Neyla Mikhailova during her numerous demonstrations of psychokinesis.[2] He found that while Mikhailova was causing objects to move without touching them, his instruments recorded a tremendous vibration throughout her body and its surrounding force field which pulsed in the direction of her gaze. Her heart and brain waves also pulsed in unison with this energy vibration, indicating that the energy Mikhailova used in her psychic feats is intimately connected with her whole body.

Reports go on to state that: "After doing these tests, Mrs. Mikhailova was utterly exhausted. There was almost no pulse. She'd lost close to four pounds in half an hour. The EEG (brain wave pattern) showed intense emotional excitement. There was high blood sugar and the endocrine system was disturbed. The whole organism was weakened as if from a tremendous stress reaction. She had lost the sensation of taste, had pains in her arms and legs, couldn't coordinate and felt dizzy."[3]

At one time, after making a seven hour film of her abilities, Mikhailova was temporarily blind. Other Soviet investigators have recorded changes in brain wave patterns which coincide with the reception of telepathic signals, and researchers in the USA have shown that the volume of blood in the body alters during telepathic interactions. This evidence leaves no doubt that psychic energy, or bioenergy, is from the body and is the same energy activating every aspect of metabolism, from functioning of the glands, to the brain and heart. It is the power behind the emotions and senses. At the same time, prana, though based on and affecting the physical structure and function, has a wider range of properties and is associated with clairvoyance, clairaudience and other forms of extrasensory perception. It has a mental or psychic component and is both gross and subtle.

Psychic energy can affect matter without any apparent physical intermediary or medium. There is some undetectable energy at work which we cannot measure though we can see its results. It can even be used in healing. Sister Dr Justa Smith, in America, has demonstrated that psychic energy affects enzymes.[4] She has found that trypsin, a digestive enzyme which is damaged and decreases activity when exposed to ultraviolet light, increases activity when exposed to a high intensity magnetic field. When a water damaged trypsin solution was held in the hands of a recognized psychic healer for 72 minutes, trypsin increased its activity.

R. Yaeger has shown that when a practitioner of kundalini yoga performed certain pranayama techniques and then sat next to an onion for 15 minutes with his hands in a fixed position, about two feet from the experimental plant, cell division, and therefore metabolic energy increased by 108%.[5] A control subject sitting in the same position, but without doing pranayama, had no effects on the plant.

We have clear evidence from these experiments that there is a new kind of psychic physiological energy that fits the description of prana and kundalini as set forth in the yogic texts and verbal traditions.

Summary

Modern science has been able to ascertain that psychic energy is a real and physically-based phenomenon. Though it does not fall into the known categories of modern science, its effects can be experienced and recorded repeatedly. No one really doubts its existence. What it is and how it functions, its relationship to our body and mind and its potential use as an evolutionary tool require further research from scientists who will find guidelines in the perspectives and experiences of dedicated yogis.

Through this, we will be better able to understand the relationship of mind and body and this will have tremendous repercussions on studies into psychosomatic medicine, psychology and other important fields. As we ourselves learn to appreciate that great joy and good health which comes from developing and being sensitive to psychic energy, a large and forgotten area of our being, we will extend our possibilities, develop our innate potential and speed up our spiritual evolution.

Defining the Nadis

Yoga and tantra lay down one of the most complete systems for a practical understanding of the human condition. Tantra supplies the philosophy, the theoretical approach. Yoga supplies techniques by which we can validate this philosophy through our own personal experience and thus attain higher knowledge. Tantra is therefore a living philosophy and not just a system of endless intellectual speculation unable to deliver the truth and leaving more questions unanswered than answered. It is also a very potent method by which we can realize ourselves in totality, and attain union, ultimate freedom and fulfilment.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of tantra to the modern world will be its ability not just to define the mind and put it into perspective, but to deliver techniques by which we can experience the mind itself and eventually transcend it through the awakening of kundalini. Modern medicine and psychology, for example, will greatly benefit from tantra's fundamental, basic components of body, mind and spirit – pingala, ida and sushumna. These flows of energy make up our total human personality and are derived from the ultimate polarity of our macrocosmic universe into Shiva and Shakti, consciousness and energy.

In trying to understand the manifestations of these forces in our body, and for research purposes, in trying to prove the reality of the existence of the nadis, we have to understand that they are not physical, measurable, dissectable structures within our physical body, but are the basic energies which underlie and motivate life and consciousness.

It is important to understand exactly what nadis are before we either try to prove their existence or disprove it. When we achieve certain states of consciousness we can see that nadis are, as yogis described them, flows of energy which we can visualize at the psychic level as having distinct channels, light, colour, sound and other characteristics. At the same time, however, these nadis underlie, and can be seen mirrored in, all bodily functions and processes. There is no separation between the nadis, the body and the mind; they are one and the same thing.

The duality of life

In many of the oriental philosophies, the entire universe is seen as a separation into two great, polarized forces, Shiva and Shakti, which are interdependent and opposite, but complementary. The universe hangs as a kind of web of interacting energies, suspended and functioning within the framework of tensions developed by the fundamental polarity. Carl Jung stated, "natural processes are phenomena of energy constantly arising out of a 'less probable' state."[1] This apparent dualism is actually a unified, holistic process from another level of consciousness, but at our own level we see it from a fragmented, limited and partial perspective.

We see polarity everywhere we look, in nature, within ourselves and within our mind. Moving from macrocosmic to microcosmic to atomic, at every level, two great principles or forces can be seen at work motivating our universe; light and dark, positive and negative, male and female. All other forces are seen to be an outcome of these two main forces. It seems amazing to us that things can be so simple and yet so profound; however, to the enlightened mind, the universe and man is just so.

All of life, therefore, has two main aspects upon which all of our perception, activity and experience are based. Our mind and body are the outcome of two main forms or modes of energy interacting and creating endless manifestations in the universe of our body. For example, we have a right and left brain, a parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous system, an anabolic and catabolic metabolism, a conscious and unconscious mind. We are poised between life and death and our whole existence is a struggle to retain balance between these two forces.

Ida and pingala

Yogis realized the existence of these forces and understood their relationship. They said that man has three main flows of energy, which they called the nadis, ida, pingala and sushumna, and which have been roughly translated as mind, body, and spirit. The third flow is the result of the balanced interaction of the first two. They also said that man functions mainly in the first two areas of body and mind, pingala and ida, the third aspect being dormant until it is stimulated by yoga or some other discipline.

Ida and pingala are roughly translated as mind and body. Though this is true at one level, when we are discussing the polarization of the total individual, the body and mind are themselves each polarized. We have to understand, however, that the nadis are not structures but are functional relationships and are really different sides of the same coin. Yogis did not describe the nadis in terms of structures, though structure exists to handle them. They described them in terms of energy, *prana*, vital and life-giving for pingala, and *chitta*, consciousness and knowing for ida. The attributes of the nadis are summarized below:

Pingala can be defined as the dynamic, active, masculine, positive, yang energy within our personality. It has a physical and mental side. Its material qualities are light, heat, solar, energy accumulating, creative, organizing, focused (centrip etal) and contractive. The positive, dynamic mental side within Freud's system is Eros, the pleasure principle, and in Jung's system it is the conscious personality, the rational, discriminating side. We can say that pingala is psychosomatic energy, outwardly directed, mind acting on body to motivate the organs of action, the karmendriyas. It is the basic energy of life.

Ida is the energy within the personality which is passive, receptive, feminine, negative, yin. At the physical level it is dark, cold, lunar, energy dissipating, disorganizing, entropic, expansive (centrifugal) and relaxing. At the mental plane Freud called it Thanatos, the death instinct, and Jung called it anima, the unconscious female within, emotional, feeling, intuitive and non-discriminating, the background on which the differences can be seen and which unifies. This is the somopsychic aspect of man, where energy is inwardly directed, and the body acts on the mind. Ida controls the sense organs or jnanendriyas and, therefore, gives us knowledge and awareness of the world we live in.

The third force

Another force exists in nature which is little understood or even appreciated, but which is of vital importance. It is a fact that when two opposing forces are equal and balanced, a third force arises. Strike a match on a matchbox and you create fire, bring positive and negative currents together and you can work machinery, unite body and mind and a third force called sushumna, spiritual energy, arises. This is one of the aims of yoga, because only when sushumna awakens can the super power of kundalini, this maximum force, ascend safely to fuel, power and create cosmic consciousness. Sushumna is a high tension power line, and ida and pingala carry the domestic lines to power the basic necessities.

Carl Jung outlined the tantric view when he described the driving force of self-realization, which he called 'individuation', as a dialectical interaction between the opposites, beginning with conflict and culminating in synthesis and integration. When perfect balance is achieved, stabilized and perfected, a state of dynamic peace is also achieved, which is a paradox, a union of opposites, the synthesis of doing and not doing, a totally new way of perceiving and experiencing life.

Few of us realize this third, spiritualized state and most of us oscillate from one state to another. Every 90 to 180 minutes ida and pingala alternate their dominance and only for a few seconds or minutes does sushumna come into potential being. It is the goal of all yogic techniques to balance and harmonize ida and pingala, life force and conscious awareness, so that they join at ajna chakra to create the inner light of knowledge and bliss and reveal the truth. In order to balance the flows of energy, yoga prescribes various techniques, asana, pranayama, shatkarma and meditation, which activate either ida, pingala or sushumna. This does not mean we are activating one structure but are, via yoga, able to manipulate the energies underlying the three possible modes of existence.

The functional modes

Nadis are flows of energy which move through each and every part of our body, the subtle counterpart of the physical flows such as nervous energy and blood. All of the thousands of nadis in the body are based on ida and pingala which spiral around the spinal cord. These are the basic two modes of function on which all of our bodily and mental processes work. Sushumna is the royal road which takes us to higher awareness and transforms the function of ida and pingala.

Each and every cell of our body, every organ, the brain and mind, everything is polarized and interconnected at both the physical and subtle levels, and this allows us to think, speak and act in a concerted, balanced, synchronous manner, every part working to help every other part. There are two basic systems in the body that control this, ida and pingala, and if we stimulate any component of one system we turn on the whole system. This is how asana, pranayama, meditation, and the whole armamentum of yogic techniques work, and this is what is meant when we say that yoga affects the nadis.

Arthur Deikman of the Department of Psychiatry, University of Colorado Medical Centre, USA, describes the two main modes of man's being from the perspective of modern psychology. At the same time he describes the nadis ida and pingala using modern psychophysiological jargon. He states, "Let us begin by considering the human being to be an organization of components having biological and psychological dimensions of organization: an 'action' mode and a 'receptive' mode."

"The action mode is a state organized to manipulate the environment. The striated muscle system and the sympathetic nervous system are the dominant physiological agencies. The main psychological manifestations of this stage are focal attention, object-based logic, heightened boundary perception, and the dominance of formal characteristics over the sensory; shapes and meanings have a preference over colours and textures. The action mode is a state of striving, oriented toward achieving personal goals that range from nutrition to defence to obtaining social rewards, plus a variety of symbolic and sensual pleasures, as well as the avoidance of a comparable variety of pain."[2]

Deikman describes ida, the receptive mode as organized around intake of environment rather than its manipulation. The sensory-perceptual system is dominant and parasympathetic function predominates. The EEG tends to alpha waves, muscle tension decreases, attention is diffuse, boundaries become hazy, and so on. It is a state of not doing. The epitome of the active mode is the state of body and mind a taxi driver would be in while driving through peak hour traffic. The epitome of the receptive mode is the deep relaxation of yoga nidra, or the introverted state of formal meditation. The true meditative state, which few scientific researchers really appreciate but which is the main aim of yoga, is an example of the third mode, or sushumna functioning, in which active and passive are fully balanced. Someone in this state is simultaneously externally and internally focused. For example, we should be driving a taxi and at the same time be in a state of total relaxation or 'not doing'. Or we would be sitting absolutely still and be filled with the dynamic energy of shakti so that we are fully awake and active internally. This is a very difficult state to describe.

We know that our active mode is designed to ensure survival and the passive mode is designed to ensure rest and recuperation of energy in the endless struggle for life and existence. Telepathy and psychic phenomena in general fit into this picture and we can hypothesize that telepathy is also designed to ensure survival. For example, we know that under conditions of extreme stress and in emergencies, people have sent psychic calls for help to close friends or relations, the emergency somehow powering this previously latent faculty. Many 'primitive' peoples also utilize these powers and take them for granted wondering why it is that 'civilized' people make such a fuss about them.

Yogis also tell us that when we practise yoga, purify our nadis and become stronger and more aware, siddhis, powers, must manifest as part of our spiritual development, though these are only side-effects and not the main aim of our practice of yoga. This, it seems, is because we develop a more synchronized functioning of all the components of our body and mind and awaken areas which have been dormant.

The need for balance

Though ida and pingala and their modes of activity are opposite, they are complementary and must be balanced for total health and peace of mind. More than this though, balance can open the door to the

transcendental and to a new mode of functioning.
Most of us spend our lives in an unbalanced state. We tend to spend increasingly longer periods in the active mode as we grow out of our childhood and find it difficult to relax into the receptive state. This is probably a major factor in the spiralling incidence of psychosomatic disease today. Deikman's research emphasizes the fact that our imbalance is reflected in every activity as well as in our social, cultural and political organization. He stresses that the often devalued ida, the receptive, feeling and intuitive mode, is far from inferior or regressive and is in fact an essential component in our highest abilities.
Such research suggests that there is a very deep and urgent need for the reintroduction of concepts such as ida and pingala at the grassroots level of society and that the recent explosion of interest in yoga, meditation and esoteric philosophy is the result of deep-rooted pain and tension resulting from imbalance in the nadis. It points to the fact that our whole approach to ourselves, our science, society and culture will require complete review and revision from the more total yogic perspective.
It is time we realized that the subtle and intangible aspects of human existence are as important as the tangible, solid and easily measurable materialistic side. It is because of our reliance purely on technology, the solid facts, and the external, pingala side of our universe that we have not found happiness, real and lasting security or peace of mind, because these things lie within us and are of the mind – ida, and are subtle. Yoga offers the techniques to bring about balance in our lives, to not only realize the subtle, but, through a science of enhanced intelligence, intuition and creativity, to make the subtle side of life a practical reality and experience, a valid and important part of our lives as individuals and within society.

Controlling the Nadis and the Brain

The human brain is truly one of the most awesome and amazing of creations. Housed within the skull, it contains some twelve thousand million cells, and each of these cells has an estimated five hundred thousand possible interconnections; there may be even more that we do not know about. When the mathematics are computed there are more possible interconnections in the brain than there are atoms in the universe.
The brain has an almost infinite capacity, and all within the two kilograms or so of amorphous, pinkish grey brain matter with the consistency of jelly or cold oatmeal porridge. How this quivering, pulsating, jellylike substance remembers, thinks, analyzes, feels, discriminates, intuits, decides, creates and directs all the countless functions of the body, integrating the whole so that we synchronize action, speech and thought, is something that each of us should contemplate daily.
Meditation on this miracle of creation, and any attempt to understand how the brain and mind function, can lead to an understanding of the total process of kundalini awakening. Indeed, many theories of how kundalini works are based on the brain, and this research can help us to better understand the basis for kundalini awakening, the nadis and chakras. This is because the brain, housing as it does the master control systems for the body within its unlimited circuitry, must contain the physical circuits for the nadis and chakras.
The brain is also the interface between the body and the mind. All sensory information travels to the brain via the jnanendriyas, the sense organs of knowledge, and is then fed into the mind, and all decisions in the mind are then translated into the body via the karmendriyas, the organs of action, in a continuous, synchronous, dynamic process. Thus within the workings of the brain we can see the workings of the nadis as described by yogis, and research is deepening our understanding of this. Yogic techniques utilize this knowledge to stimulate the body so as to achieve higher and better states of being.

The nadis in the brain

Important research from neuroscience has shown us that the brain fits into the dual nadi model of human personality as handed down to us by yoga. In a radical and last ditch attempt to cure severe, unremitting epilepsy, Roger Sperry and his associates divided the brains of their patients down the midline structure linking the two brain hemispheres, the *corpus callosum*. To their surprise, not only did the epileptics cease seizures, but they came up with startling new findings which are radically altering our neurophysiological understanding of how the brain works and are revolutionizing our whole concept of man.
We have always known the right side of the brain controls the left side of the body, and vice versa. Sperry's findings, though still in the initial stages and requiring more research, show us each side of the brain handles a completely opposite but complementary mode of consciousness. This finding is extremely important as it verifies the yogic viewpoint.
Yogis and scientists, using different terminology and approaches, have come up with the same conclusions, that man is divided into two main modes of functioning. The circuits of the brain are based on ida and pingala nadis, consciousness or knowledge, and action or physical energy. We see ida and pingala at all three major levels of the nervous system.

1. ***Sensory-motor nervous system*** **(SMS):** all electrical activity in the body moves in one of two directions, into the brain (afferent), ida, and out of the brain (efferent), pingala. Yogis have called the sensory nerves which are governed by ida, jnanendriyas, and the motor nerves, governed by pingala, karmendriyas. These nerves are concerned with perception of, and activity in, the world.
2. ***Autonomic nervous system*** **(ANS):** this is divided into the outward directed, stress handling, energy utilizing, pingala dominant, sympathetic nervous system, and the inwardly directed, rest handling, energy conserving, ida dominant, parasympathetic nervous system. These two systems control and regulate all the autonomic body processes: heart, blood pressure, respiration, digestion, liver and kidneys and so on.
3. ***Central nervous system*** **(CNS):** this consists of the brain and spinal cord and contains the controls for the SMS and ANS. The brain contains much more than this though, for it is a huge, ultimately complex computer, which stores and integrates information and puts our decisions into action in a superbly synchronized and orchestrated performance. Its functioning is definitely much more than its parts. Within the infinite circuitry of the brain resides more potential than we can realize in one lifetime; however, with regular practice, the techniques of yoga systematically clear and strengthen these circuits.

This is what the yogis have been telling us, that the circuitry for nadis and chakras exists within the CNS, along the spine and in the brain. If we are able to tap, purify, strengthen and reconnect these circuits via the various yogic techniques, we can totally transform our mind/body complex. The basis for yogic techniques lies in the fact that there is a nadi/chakra system which can be seen, at the physical level, as being the sum total of the input and output of the various sections of the nervous system and the parts of the body which connect to it. This total body/mind complex functions on the power of the three basic types of energy – ida, pingala and sushumna. We can therefore begin to understand why so many yogic techniques are specifically aimed at balancing the ida/pingala flow and increasing our awareness of its fluctuations.

Left versus right

Scientific study of the hemispheres of the brain by Sperry, Myers, Gazzaniga, Bogen and later researchers, has shown us that the left side of the brain is usually concerned with speech, logic, analysis, time and linear function, whereas the right side is silent, dark, intuitive, feeling, spatial, holistic in function, and does not require linear, structured analysis for its knowledge, though how it does know is a mystery. The right side of the brain is the physical side of ida nadi, and the left brain, of pingala. Thomas Hoover, a researcher comparing Zen with neurological discoveries, sums up the situation when he states, "The hemisphere that speaks does not know; the hemisphere that knows does not speak."

A number of word opposites have been used to describe and help us understand this view of brain function. Though the situation is not so simple, and each hemisphere must work in an integrated fashion, there is a definite trend to separate modes of function:

Left Brain (Pingala)	Right Brain (Ida)
Analysis	Understanding
Verbal	Spatial
Temporal	'Here and Now'
Partial	Holistic
Explicit	Implicit
Argument	Experience
Intellect	Intuition
Logic	Emotion
Thinking	Feeling
Active	Passive

We could also add light versus dark, conscious versus subconscious, talkative versus silent, solar versus lunar, positive versus negative, mathematics versus poetry, rational versus mystical, objective versus subjective, digital versus analogue, and many others to aid our understanding.

Emotions in the split brain

Research by Marcel Kinsbourne, neurobiologist and neuropsychologist, director of the Department of Behavioural Neurology at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Centre for Mental Retardation in Waltham, Massachusetts, throws light on brain functioning which points to the fact that the brain has two main modes of emotional activity.[1] He has found that the two halves of the brain support different emotional states. Research indicates that the left hemisphere governs happiness and positive feelings and the right brain governs sadness and negative feelings. In the abnormal situation, patients with right brain damage are often cheerful, elated and indifferent to their abnormal state. Left brain damage, on the other hand, can lead to a gloomy outlook on life and unjustified anger, guilt and despair. Most of us fluctuate from one state to another even in the normal situation, though not to the extremes found in brain damaged subjects. Still the experience of

fluctuation can be distressing if we are not balanced and healthy.
The fact the left brain is associated with bright, cheerful thoughts and the right with sad and depressing thoughts, Kinsbourne theorizes, points to the conclusion that this dual action of the brain is designed to handle our likes (pingala) and dislikes (ida). The things we like are handled by the left brain, which focuses on and then approaches the object or situation. This fits in with our active mode, the concept of the externally directed pingala nadi. We try to avoid or withdraw from the things we dislike and we tend to be much more concerned with the overall picture in this situation. This is handled by the right brain and fits in with our receptive mode, introversion and ida nadi concept.

The necessity of the right brain

The brain has two major modes or systems which must work together and be harmonized if we are not to lose the essentials of our human existence. The nadis must be balanced for optimal functioning, for sushumna to function, and for us to maximize our human elements and potential. Unfortunately, few of us are really balanced and most of us, especially men, tend towards the purely external, materialistic and technological pingala side rather than the subtle, intuitive, feeling ida side. When imbalance between the nadis is minor we may not even notice its effect, though it must manifest in our personality, behaviour, relationships and so forth, in ways that are baffling to us, and which can make our lives miserable. What happens in the normal situation can be better understood when we look at an extreme example.
Howard Gardener and his colleagues studied people with severely damaged right brains (ida) and found that they become robot-like, minus their essential human understanding.[2] He has found that only when both hemispheres of the brain are working together can we appreciate the moral of a story, the measuring of a metaphor, words describing emotion, or the punch line of a joke.
Without the right brain we lose our understanding and take things very literally. For example, someone might say that he has a broken heart and the right brain damaged person will ask, "How did it break?" They see the explicit, the facts, but cannot understand what has been implied. These people also tell jokes at the wrong moment, their sentences become meaningless and they confabulate – make up things. The important points in their sentences are lost and are submerged or flattened, becoming part of the background. There is just a stream of words without meaning or purpose. They also accept the bizarre and argue with what should normally be accepted. It is obvious then that the right brain, which yogis called ida or the receptive mind, is vital in the appreciation of relationships, of seeing how the parts fit together as a whole, in understanding.
There is also evidence to show that the right brain is not only important for normal understanding, but also holds the key for intuition and higher experience. Eugene D'Aquili, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, feels that split brain research indicates that the circuits which underlie higher mental states, from flashes of inspiration to altered states of consciousness, lie within the right brain, ida, and are powered by the emotions.[3] D'Aquili has formulated a neurological description of 'the intuitive perception of God' in which one sees reality as a unified whole, experiencing a feeling of oneness with the world. He feels it is a product of the *parietal-occipital* lobe on the right, 'non-dominant' side of the brain which somehow takes over the brain's functioning. Time is experienced as standing still and a sense of absolute and complete unity of self with the cosmos is felt. Both are features of right brain function and this experience is long lasting and totally transforms people's lives so that they find new motivation and a healthier, more fulfilling perspective of their relationship with life.
This research indicates that unless we begin to take more notice of and develop the right brain, we cannot partake in the experience of higher consciousness. According to yogis, the right and left brain, ida and pingala, must be balanced for such an experience to take place.

The necessity for balance

Most of us fluctuate according to our inner biological rhythms, moving from left to right brain, right to left nostril, active to receptive mode, every 90 to 180 minutes. These biological rhythms are well documented though their actual role and significance is not well understood and understanding of how things fit together is still in its infancy.
From the yogic point of view this rhythmic, or in the case of disease, arrhythmic swing, indicates that we are unbalanced and that one mode, one side of our nature is constantly becoming predominant. We rarely experience the more desirable state in which both sides become equal and balanced. According to yoga, when both the sad and happy hemispheres are balanced for a certain length of time, a new state arises which unites logic and intuition, transforms our emotions and enables us to power a greater range of neurological activity.
We have to understand the necessity for attaining equilibrium and that the resultant state is a better and more pleasant and puissant experience. Einstein is an example of a natural yogi who used both sides of his brain. Meditating on what it would be like to ride on a ray of light, he had a sudden and powerful flash of intuition, a piercing insight into the mysteries of the universe, indicating right brain function, and was able to harness

his left brain to construct a theory of energy and matter conversion which totally revolutionized science and replaced the several hundred year old paradigm of Newton. Einstein stated, "The real thing is intuition. A thought comes and I may try to express it in words afterwards." Yogis would say that Einstein had not only experienced the awakening of Shakti in his nadis, but that this initial awakening had also led to activation of a chakra. This powerful experience transformed and enriched not only his life, but many other lives as well. Perhaps the best known example of non-analytical creative genius is that of Leonardo da Vinci, who in 1490 invented a spring-driven car, a helicopter, as well as many other things which came into common usage centuries after his time. His achievements extend into many more fields, and apparently he used his right brain intuition to create an idea, because most of his work is in the form of drawings and visual images rather than in written words.

Of course, there are times when we only require the left brain, for example, while doing a mathematical equation, working on a factory production line, or implementing management policy. However, these things quickly become boring if the right brain is not being used, and such monotonous repetitious activity can lead to atrophy of our right brain capacities, and even to disease situations, because such a lifestyle lacks creativity and is meaningless for us. It is minus the right brain's capacity to see meaning in the things we do. There comes a time when we must bring intuition into our lives, though this does not mean that because we use intuition we will become another Einstein. Intuition is as commonplace and necessary as eating and breathing. If our lives are to be happy and creative we must bring it into action more. Most situations, in fact, demand it for their proper outcome even though we do not realize it. Even simple situations require intuition, for example, knowing when to shift gears in a car, knowing when a cake in the oven is baked, knowing when it is the right time to say something nice to a friend, or how much strength is required to turn a screw. We have to feel what is required using our right brain. There is no book and no one who can give us this information. There can be no linear-structured analysis of what must be a non-verbal, intuitive knowledge that springs from within, the intuitive flash has no time dimension and defies logic. Within less than a second a total picture can be presented to our mind, the key to unlocking the mysteries of science is gained and the seeds for hours and years of inspired work and research may be planted.

For many people intuition is an unknown and unknowable commodity. Years of unhealthy living, lack of direction, purpose and meaning, consistent overstimulation of our sensory nerves, leading to dulling of our senses and an inability to find contentment and satisfaction, plus unresolved, ongoing mental tension and anxiety (unhealthy ida), added to lack of exercise, sedentary lifestyle and overeating (unhealthy pingala), all contribute to damaging the intuitive apparatus in the right side of the brain and may even damage the logical, reasoning capacity of the left side. We may find it very difficult if not impossible to repair and reinstitute function by the normal methods of medicine and psychotherapy. Though yoga possesses the techniques by which we can rebalance, reintegrate, regenerate and rejuvenate our body/mind complex by bringing about balance in the nadis, even then it may be too late for some people.

The balanced view

Most of us fluctuate from one side of our brain to the other in well documented 90 minute cycles of rest (ida) and activity (pingala). A study by Raymond Klein and Roseanne Armitage of the Department of Psychology at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia found that performance of tasks involving left and right brain activity comes in 90 to 100 minute cycles.[4] For 90 minutes, subjects could do well on right brain tasks and then switch over to doing well in left brain related tasks. This also corresponds with the 90 minute fluctuation in nostril dominance and points to agreement with the yogic theory that there is an intimate relationship between the breath and the brain and their cyclical activity.

If we are unhealthy, then our brain cycles may become abnormal in rhythm, duration, quality of function, or in some other way. Our whole life is disturbed and this situation actually occurs much more than any of us, even medical science, has previously realized. Yogis diagnosed dysfunction of brain rhythm by examining the flow of air in the nostrils. Yogis have repeatedly asserted that there is strong link between not just the nostrils and the brain but between the eyes and ears and all body organs. Of course, today we know from our anatomy and physiology that this is so, however, yogis were saying the same thing thousands of years ago. In meditative experience they could feel the flows of energy in the nerves moving into and out of the brain and the rest of the body. They were able to perceive even more subtle levels of their being because they invented techniques which developed a great deal of sensitivity and strength. These techniques also allowed them to assert control over the nadis, the brain and all bodily processes.

Shambhavi mudra and trataka are two of the most powerful techniques of kundalini yoga, designed to awaken ajna chakra by balancing ida and pingala. If this is so, and if the nadis described by yogis are in the brain then it means that yogic techniques can balance the brain hemispheres. Research from split brains is revealing that this is so. We know that in normal people, pictures appearing on the left side of our viewing

field and sound in the left ear, both transmitted to the right brain, are less agreeable than when they are presented to the other side, according to Kinsbourne. Other research shows us that when we are gloomy we tend to gaze to the left, affecting the right hemisphere, whereas happiness causes the opposite to occur.[5]
This research indicates a definite relationship between eye position and hemispheric dominance. It also indicates that shambhavi mudra and trataka balance brain hemisphere activity because the eyes are held steady at the centre of the forehead, crossed in shambhavi and straight ahead in trataka. Even when we practise these techniques we may feel a very powerful stimulation and pressure within the centre of the head, ajna chakra activation, and the subjective experience is that of simultaneous extroversion and introversion. Shambhavi is the more powerful technique and induces an almost immediate effect. Centralized focusing of awareness appears to affect both nadis simultaneously.

Balanced breathing

Even more conclusive evidence of yoga's ability to control the nadis in the brain has emerged in relation to our ability to control the brain via the nostrils. David ShannahoffKhalsa of the Salk Institute for Biological Sciences in the USA has shown that even a simple breathing exercise can enable us to alter short term brain hemisphere dominance at will.[6] Whereas the previous research has been implied and theoretical, this study shows a definite relationship between brain activity, the nasal cycle and our capacity to control our personality. Shannahoff-Khalsa found that when one nostril has the dominant air flow the opposite hemisphere of the brain is dominant. Forceful breathing through the more congested nostril awakens the less dominant hemisphere. This is an extremely important finding. The EEG responses consistently showed a relationship between nasal airflow and brain hemisphere dominance for all four types of brain waves, beta, alpha, theta and delta.
Shannahoff-Khalsa states that, "The nose is an instrument for altering cortical activity."[7] He suspects that the nasal cycle is also linked to the basic rest/activity cycle, which includes within the sleep cycle, the rapid eye movement (REM) phase and the non-REM phase, because right nostril/left hemisphere dominance corresponds to phases of increased activity (pingala), and left nostril/right hemisphere dominance corresponds to rest phases (ida). This research verifies what yogis have been telling us and will require more experimentation to repeat the findings and reveal the ramifications in terms of medicine, psychology and our lives in general. It also reveals that buried within the brain are undreamed of capabilities and potentials which can transform our lives if we can tap them.
While scientists search for wonder drugs, external stimuli to probe the deeper aspects of man, yoga provides a concise and precise theoretical framework, within the nadi/chakra system, for a deeper understanding of the total human range of existence and the techniques by which to manipulate our internal environment, to stimulate internal secretions and to maintain balance, optimal health and higher awareness.

Evidence for the Existence of Nadis

Of major importance for scientific acceptance of the whole science of kundalini yoga, is the proof for the existence of the psychic network of energy flows called nadis. The whole process of kundalini yoga rests on the premise that within the human body there exists a system of nadis, flows of energy, which conduct energy, both physical and mental. There are three main nadis: ida, pingala and sushumna, and there are said to be thousands and thousands of nadis spread throughout the whole body. Though these nadis are body-based they are not physical structures but rather appear to be functional. They are dynamic, alive, moving, powering the body and mind, intimately linked with nerves, blood vessels and all our body organs. While there is no known physical structural support system for them, yogis maintain that they definitely do exist and have even mapped their pathways in the body and their effects on the mind.

Correspondence of yoga and acupuncture

Dr Hiroshi Motoyama, the President of the International Association for Religion and Parapsychology,[1–9] has been working consistently to prove the existence of nadis and acupuncture meridians, as well as the chakras. He is a graduate from the Tokyo University of Education with PhD degrees in philosophy and clinical psychology, and was recognized by UNESCO in 1974 as one of the world's ten foremost parapsychologists. He has even invented his own equipment in order to elucidate the science of yoga and to make this knowledge scientifically clear and acceptable. He states:
"By studying a number of books about the nadis and chakras of yoga over the last two years, I have been able to establish that asana, mudra, pranayama and dharana were ingeniously evolved on the basis of knowledge of the nadi system."
Motoyama states that acupuncture and the yogic concept of nadis have the same foundation and have affected each other for over 2000 years. That is, we are dealing with systems that have been in operation for millennia. This in itself is reason to believe that there must be something firm and solid at their foundations for people to

have accepted and followed their theories for so long. Systems which do not give results are usually quickly discarded.

As an example of the correspondence of acupuncture and yoga, Motoyama points out that the concept of the *triple heater meridian* in acupuncture and the five pranas of the body in yogic physiology are almost identical. In acupuncture the lower heater, the area below the navel, corresponds to apana, the middle heater corresponds to samana between the diaphragm and navel and the upper heater corresponds to the prana between the throat and the diaphragm.

Yoga also states that chakras act as transducers, converting psychic energy into physical energy and vice versa. They distribute this energy to the body via nadis. Several acupuncture meridians lie in the areas attributed to the chakras and nadis, for example, the *governor vessel* in the spine corresponds with sushumna nadi and the *conception vessel* running along the front midline of the body is used in kundalini kriyas. Several meridians start or finish in chakra locations.

Proof of nadis

One of the machines Motoyama has developed in order to prove the existence of nadis and meridians is the AMI, or 'Apparatus for Measuring the Functional Conditions of Meridians and their Corresponding Internal Organs'. This is an instrument designed to measure electrical currents in the body. It measures the steady state current that exists all the time, as well as the current in the body in response to an electrical shock from DC voltage. He uses it to measure the charge at special acupuncture points alongside the base of the fingernails and toenails. These are called *sei* (spring, well) points and are said to be the terminals for meridians, where psychic energy either enters or exits from the body.

In an experiment designed to substantiate the existence of acupuncture meridians and nadis, Motoyama placed electrodes on seven acupuncture points lying along the left *triple heater meridian* which runs along the back of the left arm and the front of the body, as well as a random electrode on the right palm, a point far from the area to be electrically stimulated. He then gave the subject a painful 20 volt shock to the 'sei' or beginning point of the *triple heater meridian*, at the tip of the fourth fingernail. A few milliseconds later he recorded an overall and equal physical reaction in all electrodes caused by excitation of the sympathetic nervous system in response to pain.

To prove that nadis do exist he then gave a very mild, painless and sensationless shock to the same point and two to three seconds later recorded an electrical response only in those specific points said, since ancient times, to be connected to the *triple heater meridian*. No response was recorded on the palm electrode or in any other part of the body. It is an interesting fact that the greatest response was found in the electrode at the other end of the meridian, just below the navel. No physiological or neurological connection is known to explain the phenomenon, however, the yogic and acupuncture explanations are validated by this experiment. It is very important to realize that the effect of stimulating the meridian electrically is not a neurological process because the movement of energy in the nadi and meridian is much slower than we find in nerves. The energy we are dealing with is something else, some other form that we have as yet not understood. This fact is substantiated by the work of Dr Nagahama at the Chiba University Medical School in Japan, who showed that the time it took for the sensation to pass along the meridian was hundreds of times slower (15 to 48 centimetres per second) than nerve conduction (5 to 80 metres per second). Therefore, we have to postulate the existence of some other channel of transmission and nadis fit this description exactly.

In another experiment, Motoyama coated a subject's arm with a paint consisting of liquid crystals which react to changes in temperature by changing colour. When the 'sei' point of an acupuncture meridian was stimulated by heat for from two to five minutes, the liquid crystals in certain subjects changed colour in a band along the meridian being stimulated. This not only further supports the above research but also substantiates another claim of yoga, that one of the characteristics of prana is generating heat in the body.

Motoyama has been able to visually demonstrate and measure subtle changes in the body that point to the fact that there is a flow of some kind of energy in the body which does not fit in with our present day knowledge of body mechanisms, such as in neurophysiology, yet which has a physical counterpart that laboratories can record. The exact nature of this flow of energy, the connections between the subtle and gross physical structures and the method by which prana acts on the body await further clarification.

What we do know is that we are dealing with a new phenomenon, and a very important one which has tremendous relevance to our present day needs in terms of understanding the body and mind and the relationship between energy and consciousness.

The nadis and disease

Motoyama's experiments have also shown that the energy he is measuring is not just a peripheral phenomenon, some byproduct of electrical and chemical processes, but of primary importance to our health. He has developed a system by which we can use our measurements of the electrical state of the nadi system to know about our body's state of health and even of each individual organ.

The AMI is supersensitive, able to record minute changes in activity. It measures three different states of the

nadi system. The first is the baseline reading or steady state value, that which exists in our body all the time. This tells us about our general long term constitution. Secondly, it measures the body's reaction to a very mild and sensationless electrical stimulation, which tells us how we react to events. And thirdly, it records the after-effects of the stimulus, which gives information on the temporary functions of the body and basic tissue resistance.

Thousands of such readings have been recorded and it has been found that most of us fit into a 'normal' range of values. If the value recorded is more than normal, the meridian is overactive relative to most people, while a low value indicates an underactive nadi. For example, one man whom Motoyama studied at Stanford University in America had lung cancer. Instead of the normal value of 1,000, this man had a value of only 150, showing great depletion of energy in that area, and indeed, he was very sick. A number of hospitals in Japan are using Motoyama's AMI machine to screen patients and the Kanagawa Rehabilitation Centre in Japan is comparing the results of X-ray and biochemistry with it. So far the results have been very favourable.

Motoyama has worked out that by measuring values of electrical skin resistance at acupuncture points in response to a small electric stimulus on both sides of the body, and then comparing the values from the left and right sides, any imbalance in the readings indicates that disease is present in the organ linked to the meridian being measured. He found that any percentage difference greater than 1.21 indicated disease. For example, when the heart meridian value on the left was more that 1.21 times greater than the right, the EGG might show an abnormal rhythm. One patient who was found to have imbalance in the liver, gall bladder and stomach meridians, but who only had symptoms of stomach upset was found on X-ray to have gallstones. One of Motoyama's laboratory assistants showed a large difference between the left and right bladder and kidney values shortly before being diagnosed as having cystitis.

It is interesting to note that yogis are also found to have abnormally high readings, but without disease, and Motoyama states that this indicates a greater range of activity of the nervous system as a result of yogic techniques.

These findings are very important because they indicate that pranic energy, or *ki*, which yogis have experienced as flowing in the nadis, is real. Yogis state that an imbalance in the nadis, especially ida and pingala, will cause disease and that yogic techniques can rectify this situation by acting on the nadis. Motoyama's work substantiates this. It points to the fact that not only is prana real, physical and measurable, but that its balanced activity is vital to our health and that we can use our measurements of pranic activity in the various organs of the body to diagnose impending or existing disease and thereby either prevent or treat the condition before it becomes too far advanced.

Such research is paving the way for new diagnostic techniques in medicine. We are beginning to absorb the subtler aspects of our existence into our modern scientific understanding of the body and are utilizing this knowledge in our armamentum against disease to better our lives and to uplift society.

Imbalance in the nadis

Motoyama's research supports the claim by yogis that within our body are flows of energy with physical and psychic properties. Yogis also tell us that the nadis are intrinsically related to the flows of breath in the nostrils. The breath in the right nostril is related to the function of pingala (left brain), and in the left nostril is related to the function of ida (right brain). This fact is the basis for swara yoga, the science by which we can know about the state of our body and mind in relation to the outer environment by watching the flow of breath in the nostrils.

The fact that the nadis are related to the nostrils is the basis for the science of pranayama, one of the most important and basic ingredients in kundalini yoga. For it is by manipulating the flows of breath that we can learn to control the deeper and more subtle aspects of our body and mind, to release energy and to send it to areas of the body that we wish to energize, heal and awaken. This relationship between the flow of breath and the nostrils has been demonstrated by research from Rumania.

Dr I.N. Riga, an ear, nose and throat specialist from Bucharest, Rumania, studied nearly 400 patients suffering from one-sided nasal obstructions due to distortion and deviation of the nasal septum.[10] He found that 89 percent of cases breathed more through the left nostril and were more prone to certain types of respiratory diseases such as chronic sinusitis, middle and inner ear infections, partial or total loss of the senses of smell, hearing and taste, recurrent pharyngitis, laryngitis and tonsillitis, and chronic bronchitis.

He also found these left nostril (ida) breathers were more likely to suffer from one or more of a wide variety of more distant disorders, such as amnesia, intellectual weakening, headaches, hyperthyroidism, heart failure, gastritis, colitis, peptic ulcer, poor liver function, constipation and reproductive problems, such as a decreased libido and menstrual irregularities.

Patients whose breath flowed predominantly through the right nostril were predisposed to hypertension. Riga found that correction of nasal deformities helped to relieve the disease situation.

Riga's research supports the yogic theory of nadis and indicates that the nostrils and the flow of breath in them

are much more important than we previously realized, having many neurological and psychic connections whose function is not known. It supports Motoyama's work which shows that imbalance in the nadis is related to disease states and points to the fact that the nostrils are, as yogis have said, windows into the state of our body and mind, a fact which medical science can use in diagnosing many disease situations.
More than this, the nostrils and the science of pranayama allow us to influence the body and mind by influencing the nervous system and psychic energy at the more subtle levels of our being. The nostrils are switches which can do more than merely alleviate disease. By controlling the speed, rate, rhythm, length and duration of the breath, by altering the ratio of inhalation to exhalation in the nostrils and by stopping the breath, we can activate or tone down neurological and mental processes so as to achieve heightened awareness and altered states of consciousness.
Yoga is a science of self-regulation which is a priceless gem in today's disease and worry-ridden world. It bestows knowledge about internal flows of energy and thereby mastery over the inner processes of our being and autonomy, independence and confidence in our ability to deal with the constant demands and pressures of modern living. In the long run, regular, sincere practice and proper guidance by a competent master balances the nadis and eventually awakens kundalini.

Neurophysiology of the Chakras

The chakras can be interpreted from many points of view, for example, physical, psychological, behavioural, psychic, symbolic, mythical, religious, scientific, evolutionary, spiritual and more. They have both a microcosmic aspect within the human framework and, at the same time, a macrocosmic aspect which totally encompasses our perception and experience of life. At whatever level we examine them, they represent a hierarchical, interlocking and interdependent series of mandalas which, when superimposed on one another, make up a total picture of the human personality.
Each of us stands at a certain point of evolution that ascends the chakras and this will determine how we see the world. Someone who lives at swadhisthana sees the world in terms of gratification of his desires, for example, at manipura in terms of gratification of power instincts, at anahata in terms of compassion and love for all humanity. The degree of evolution of the chakras depends to a great extent on the activity within our nervous system and our state of consciousness. Someone at a lower level cannot understand someone at a higher level whereas the person at a higher level has been at the lower level before, has a wider range of experience, and importantly, has more circuits awakened or activated for handling life's experiences, for perceiving at different levels, and for interpreting and acting on the demands of life.
Even within the same chakra there are different levels of evolution, balance and activity, so that someone living at manipura might be more aware than someone else at manipura, their centre being more balanced and awakened, so that, for example, they use their power drives in a constructive and positive manner to help people, rather than in a destructive and negative way for their own personal ego gratification. An adult generally has a more evolved manipura chakra than a child, protecting the child from danger while the child pulls the wings off butterflies or gaily stamps on ants and insects. Of course, this is relative and varies from individual to individual.
Each level in the chakra system is the sum total of various physical, emotional, mental, psychic and spiritual elements. Each chakra has its own neurological plexus and endocrine gland and these link up to various organs and systems in the body. These organs and systems in turn are connected to the controlling mechanisms of the brain, each of which has emotional, mental and psychic components. The chakra is like a transducer, a linking point between the various levels of our being and it converts and channels energy either up or down to the various levels.
Therefore, we can think of each level in the spinal cord as controlling a different segment of the body, and at the same time, representing a level of functioning in the nervous system and mind. Ajna, for example, is a much more complex centre than mooladhara, or any chakra for that matter, controlling as it does the intuitive and higher mental faculties related to the most evolved circuits in the cerebral cortex. Ajna has as its symbol the two-petalled lotus, and we can think of this as representing the two hemispheres of the brain with the pineal gland as its central point. Mooladhara, on the other hand, controls very deep, powerful, primitive, animalistic, unconscious urges and instincts which are related to very simple and primitive neurological circuits at the bottom of the brain common to all animals, reptiles and even birds.

The chakras within the brain

Discoveries in neuroscience, precipitated by fantastic advances in technology, measuring capacity, surgical technique and pure pioneering perspicacity, promise to revolutionize our concepts of man and propel us into new and better techniques in medicine, psychology and living in general. Like Einstein's discovery of relativity, the ramifications of these discoveries take time to percolate down into common usage.

The brain is one of the hardest of all areas to research because of the inaccessibility and delicacy of the area to be studied. There is also an inherent and almost insoluble problem in studying the brain. Man is using his brain to study and understand his own brain. This is like trying to understand the mind with the mind, or grasp the hand with the same hand, or see the eye with the same eye. We cannot know ourselves objectively as we can know an external object or person, for we are the knowledge itself. Besides this, very few people are keen to let doctors open up their skulls and look inside.

Neurosurgeons and yogis share common ground because both aim to know the truth and reality about themselves. It is only the approach which differs. While scientific researchers have approached the brain objectively and have attacked and dissected it with knives and scalpels, probed it with electrodes, photographed and X-rayed it, stimulated and drugged it in order to mechanically and externally manipulate its circuits into giving up their secrets, yogis decided to scientifically discover the secrets of the brain by experiencing it directly through meditation. Their findings agree with those of modern science.

Yogis discovered through meditation that within their bodies were circuits and centres with both physical and psychic components, which they called nadis and chakras. Though we take this for granted now, we must remember that these studies were made thousands of years ago without the aid of modern microscopes and equipment. Not only did yogis achieve a wonderfully complete and practical system of techniques, but way back then they also based their techniques on the discovery that there are six major primary centres in the body, the chakras, in a hierarchical, interconnected network within the spinal cord. They also observed that each of these chakras had its own definite physical, psychological and behavioural characteristics, connected to the brain by a network of energy flows, all of which did not necessarily correspond to purely physical structures. They also discovered many secondary centres which were subsidiary to these primary ones.

The chakras in the spinal cord were found to be points manipulated by focusing attention, mental and psychic energy, breath and body postures, so as to derive certain physical and psychic experiences. The techniques allow us to learn to control the most basic and vital instincts and needs of body, emotions, mind, psyche and spirit.

Recent discoveries from neurophysiology and anatomy show that vital nerve plexes and endocrine organs exist within the body, spine and brain and correspond to the levels described by yogis. These findings support the claims of yogis that their system is more than just mere exercises and relaxation. It is a method of supplying the tools to control our body, mind, metabolism and personality.

The triune brain

Dr Paul MacLean, neurophysiologist and head of the Laboratory of Brain Evolution and Behaviour at the National Institute of Mental Health, USA, has demonstrated that the brain of man is functionally divided into three main areas, three interconnected biological computers, each with its own special intelligence, subjectivity, sense of time and space, memory, motor and other functions.[1] Each brain corresponds to a separate evolutionary step and is also distinguished neuro-anatomically and functionally, containing strikingly different distributions of the main neurochemicals in the brain, which are dopamine and serotonin. If we look carefully into these levels and compare descriptions of neuroscientists and yogis we see that both were saying the same thing. (See figures 1 and 2)

The three levels are called the reptilian, mammalian and human levels:

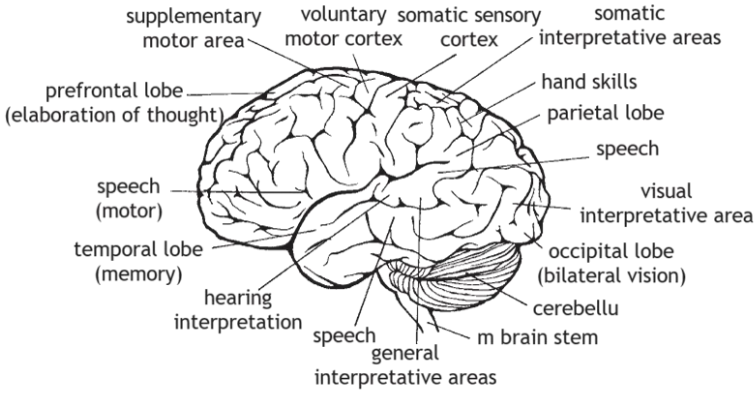


Figure 1: Outer Surface of the Brain

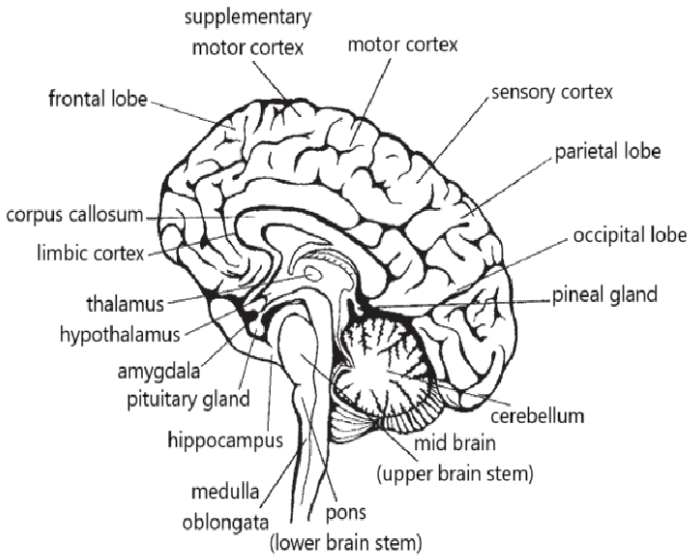


Figure 2: Inner Surface of the Brain

1. **The Reptilian Complex** includes the very topmost spinal cord and the lower areas of the brain, including the medulla oblongata and part of the reticular activating system, that part responsible for our waking, conscious state. This area contains the basic neural machinery for self-preservation and reproduction, including regulation of the heart, blood circulation and respiration. It controls mating, social hierarchies, insistence on routine, obedience to precedent and ritual, and slavish imitation of fads and fashions.

According to MacLean, the R-complex plays an important role in aggressive behaviour, territoriality, ritual and the establishment of social hierarchies. This area corresponds to the description of the mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras, because yogis have told us these centres maintain our most basic and primitive, animalistic drives and instincts; basic living, eating, sleeping and procreating within a dark and primitive, monotonous and repetitious existence, minus joy, love and self-awareness. They are related to our deepest unconscious and subconscious mind.

MacLean and his co-workers have found that this area dominates the lives of most people, which agrees with the statement by yogis that most people live in mooladhara and swadhisthana, though their function is modified by the higher centres. We spend most of our time controlled by and stimulating the lower chakras within the blinding limitations of our daily rituals.

MacLean has also shown that this is true neurologically. Removing the cerebral cortex from hamsters a day or two after birth and leaving only the R-complex and limbic system, MacLean found that the hamsters grew up normally, gave birth and displayed every form of behaviour normal for hamsters. They could even see without a visual cortex. Leaving only the R-complex in birds, he found that they could function normally and carry on most kinds of communication and day-to-day routines. This research indicates that our day-to-day functions are controlled by these primitive areas and that we do not really need much more of our brain to handle the basic problems and demands of a neatly ordered, socially accepted lifestyle. We rarely stimulate our higher centres, and in fact find it hard to cope with any demands out of the ordinary. This is why yogis tell us to practise yoga so as to develop our inner unused capacity, some nine-tenths of the brain or more, and to stimulate the development of our higher centres.

Psychology also tells us that beneath the sane façade of any human being there lurks a primitive creature, instinctive and irrational, a Mr Hyde composite of all that is animalistic and forbidden. Freud called this the *id*, an unconscious area from which arises our desires, passions and the energy underlying our emotions and sense of who we are. Yogis call this mooladhara and swadhisthana and tell us that the unconscious and subconscious areas have two centres controlling them, one located in the perineum and the other in the spine behind the pubic bone controlling sexuality and all its related behaviour. Both psychologists and yogis tell us that most of us spend most of our time trying to gratify and fulfil these basic urges for food (survival) and pleasure. Much of our time, for example, is organized for making our daily 'bread', a slang term for money, with which we can buy food, shelter, clothing and pleasure. Few of us realize that there is much more to life than this. By practising yoga we learn to balance and control these centres physically and also at the level of their instincts and drives, freeing their energy from primitive, compulsive ritual and rechannelling it up sushumna to the higher centres for the awakening of higher consciousness.

2. **The mammalian structures** are under the control of the limbic system, which controls emotion, memory and other behaviour which is less ritualistic and more spontaneous. This system is also thought to control playful behaviour, exhilaration, awe and wonder and the subtler, more human emotions such as love. MacLean has found that damage to areas of this part of the brain results in deficits in maternal behaviour and absence of play.

Within the limbic system are the behavioural centres for rage, fright, fear, feelings of punishment, anxiety, hunger, desire, pleasure, pain, sex, joy and love. This area is thus related to manipura and anahata functioning. If we stimulate the areas of the spinal cord behind the navel and heart associated with the chakras, we will send energy into the brain to turn on the various components at the physical, mental and behavioural levels associated with the chakras.

3. **The human side** of the brain is the most recently evolved neocortex, the seat of intelligence and many of the characteristic human cognitive functions. It is here that, with amazing speed and precision, the various faculties are integrated and synchronized. The cortex makes possible: thinking, calculation, analysis, discrimination, intuition, creativity, use of symbols, planning, anticipation of the future, artistic and scientific expression, and myriad other highly evolved and purely human faculties.

We know that the frontal lobes of the brain are especially important, being the most recently evolved part of the brain. Some researchers think that this part of the brain, in connection with the other sections, is responsible for the very human capacity of self-awareness and knowledge of this selfawareness; we know that we know, and we know that too.

We know that patients with severe frontal lobe damage or who have had frontal lobotomies, operations which sever the frontal lobes from the rest of the brain, are incapable of planning for the future and lack a continuous

sense of self. They cannot see what effect a certain action will have on the future. Such people become dull, slow, cease to care for themselves or others, or about what they say or do. They are friendly, co-operative vegetables with a serious lack of imagination and loss of interest in life. They may be suffering from intense pain and not even care about the fact.

The frontal lobes are, therefore, said to be responsible for planning and discrimination, for anticipation of the future and thus for the purely human emotion of anxiety. This differs from fear which is related to an actual event. Anxiety is a mental event, related to some future occurrence. It is valuable for our survival and evolution as individuals and as a species, caring for the family unit, for society and for compassion. More than this it is the force responsible for motivating the formulation of laws and economic and political systems, for motivating the development of the arts and sciences, religions and systems of ethics, all philosophies, and the development of materially and spiritually secure cultures. As we developed the capacity to plan, the frontal lobes freed our hands for the manipulation of tools, drawing, writing and other bases for human cultural development.

Knowledge of death and the anxiety it engenders spurs us to make the most of life and to develop religious or spiritual systems which help us to cope with the thought of death. It has also led to the yogic sciences which liberate us from death and take us to immortality.

David Loye believes that not only are the frontal lobes involved in anticipation, but are actually involved in seeing into the future.[2] He states that when, for example, a car is rapidly approaching, the frontal brain alerts both right and left hemisphere components to process all the information from the rest of the brain, agreements and disagreements, so that we can discriminate and decide what will most likely happen. He found in two separate studies that people who tended to use both sides of the brain were better able to predict the outcome of events than either right or left-brain dominant people. This supports the yogic view that both sides of our nature must be balanced for proper function, fuller living and the development of our inner potential.

Ajna chakra

All of these intellectual, intuitive, creative and expressive functions are said by yogis to be characteristic of ajna and vishuddhi chakras. We know that yogic techniques are especially aiming at stimulation of ajna chakra, which lies at the pineal gland, midway between the hemispheres.

Yogis state that ajna chakra and the pineal gland as its physical centre, is the master control chakra, the guru chakra. We know from physiology that just in front of the pineal gland lies the thalamus, at the top of the limbic system. The thalamus has been found to be one of the main centres regulating the interaction of our senses and motor activity (ida and pingala), the prefrontal cortex, which includes the right and left sides of the brain (ida and pingala), the hypothalamus, which integrates and expresses emotion and regulates the ANS and the endocrine glands, and the cerebellum, which helps to control movement. It therefore integrates senses, thought, emotion and action. It is also important in the recognition of pain and other sensory modalities, such as variations in the degree of temperature and touch, the size, shape and quality of objects contacting the sense organs. Another interesting fact is that it is involved in the control of movement and especially the degree of squeezing and contracting of muscles and joints.

We see, therefore, that the pineal/thalamic area fits the description for ajna chakra, the area where senses and emotion, both ida functions, and motor and intellect, both pingala functions, meet. Yogis tell us that fusion of ida and pingala at ajna is one of the definitions of yoga. It leads to an explosion within the nervous system which somehow fuels and activates a much larger number of circuits within both hemispheres and the limbic system than would normally occur. It is as though our nervous system suddenly becomes charged with a high tension electric line, which yogis called sushumna.

Yogis also tell us that ajna is involved in intuition and perception of the subtle and psychic. If the thalamic area handles degrees of perception and motor activity, making it possible for us to experience the subtle things of life, then yogic techniques may allow us to develop our sensitivity in this area so as to be able to expand and extend our normal capacities in order to sense the psychic quality of matter, an 'extra' sense or common sense, occurring at the meeting point of all the senses, the thalamus.

The chakras in perspective

Yogis tell us that the chakras lie along the spinal cord, that mooladhara lies in the perineum and the other chakras move upward towards sahasrara at the apex of man's evolution and consciousness. Ajna chakra is the highest centre in which man feels that he exists separate from the universe. Union or cosmic consciousness takes place in sahasrara. Ajna is the controlling chakra, the guru centre where commands are heard.

Neurophysiology points out that there are centres in the brain, stretching upward from the medulla oblongata to the pineal/thalamic area which correspond to the classical description of the chakras as told by yogis. We can say that within the brain all these fall under the control of ajna chakra, that there are layers of evolution within ajna, and as each chakra awakens in the spine, it affects the level of conscious awakening and activity in ajna. The pineal/thalamic area would represent that part of the brain which is most awakened and

fully activated by total ajna chakra awakening, while the medulla oblongata area is that part which corresponds to the mooladhara chakra area. This would explain the close link between mooladhara and ajna; that the awakening of one consequentially awakens the other.
In most people, ajna, the thalamic/pineal area, is dormant. Living mostly in mooladhara and swadhisthana would mean that ajna functions mainly from the medulla oblongata, the reptilian brain. When we stimulate and awaken the centres through yoga, we jump levels in our nervous system and consciously awaken the higher pineal/thalamic areas and their concomitant levels of consciousness. When ida and pingala meet in ajna, energy flows from mooladhara to ajna, from the medulla oblongata to the pineal/thalamic area.
There are many techniques which can work on ajna chakra, such as shambhavi mudra, trataka, mantra japa, nadi shodhana and bhramari pranayama, to name a few. When we say these techniques are stimulating ajna chakra we are really stating that somehow they stimulate the integrating and centrally located pineal/thalamic area and thereby awaken our normally dormant, higher intellectual/emotional, logical/intuitive functions. They stimulate the higher elements of ajna and raise our consciousness up out of the lower, reptilian medulla oblongata. The techniques balance the functioning of our total brain/mind complex, ida and pingala, by focusing on the central, stimulating area and set the stage for the awakening of kundalini.

Evidence for the Existence of Chakras

Kundalini yoga teaches us techniques to influence our nervous system and mind so as to bring about total balance and reintegration at every level of our being. It is an expanded concept of man, a method of developing creative awareness and, more than this, of putting the knowledge gained to use via a system of experiential techniques. It helps us to develop a new outlook on life and ourselves. The chakras and their interaction within the totality of our personality, stretched between ida and pingala, balanced in sushumna, open up new dimensions for our mind and understanding to explore and develop. The techniques of kundalini yoga involve kriyas, combinations of asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha, rotation of breath and consciousness through nadis and subtle spaces, repetition of mantra and the piercing of psychic centres. These heat up the psychic and physical energies of man and activate and awaken the chakras to our conscious level of experience and control. The techniques are also designed to bring about balanced purification and activation of all the chakras, with the gentle accentuation of one or two important centres. Techniques, such as ajapa japa, achieve this aim, creating a psychic friction which ignites the spark of higher consciousness.
When conditions for ignition reach the required temperature and pressure, energy is liberated within the body and mind, transforming our total personality. This energy must be real and actual; though perhaps as yet undefined and not qualified. It is measurable at both the physical and psychic levels if we have the correct conditions, equipment and understanding of the phenomena. In this regard, researchers have begun to pioneer exploration into the uncharted depths of the human psyche and are devising techniques and equipment to assess, measure and scientifically prove the existence of the chakras as the primary controlling points for different levels of our being.

Measuring the chakras

Dr Hiroshi Motoyama has helped to pioneer scientific research into yoga and the phenomena of kundalini and chakras. He states: "Fascinated . . . I too began physiological experiments about fifteen years ago to try to determine if chakras actually exist and their relationship to the autonomic nervous system and internal organs . . . through various examinations we have been able to determine that there are significant differences in the physiological function of the organ associated with the chakra that the individual subjects claimed to have awakened. Therefore, this research has led to the conclusion that chakras do, in fact, exist."[1]
In his search for the existence of chakras, Motoyama has developed his own machinery. One of these is the 'chakra instrument' which is designed to detect the electromagnetic field of the body and any changes which take place in it due to chakra stimulation and activation. Looking like a telephone booth and enclosed in a light-proof, lead-shielded room, the machine was designed to detect energy generated in the body and then emitted from it in terms of various physical variables such as electrical, magnetic and optical energy changes. Copper electrodes are positioned at the top and bottom of the cage and a sliding, square panel with electrodes on all four sides (left, right, front, back), is free to traverse up and down the frame structure so as to be positioned at any part of the subject's body. An electromagnetic field is set up between the electrodes and any vital energy ejected from the body affects this very sensitive field.
A copper electrode and a photo-electric cell are positioned 12 and 20 centimetres in front of the subject, level with the classical position for a given chakra. The location is monitored for changes as the individual concentrates his mental energy at the chakra point, and measurements are made for three to five minutes

before, during and after concentration on the chakra. Because of its powerful pre-amplifier (impedance near infinity), even the most subtle energy ejection can be picked up and recorded. Information recorded is sent to various amplifiers, computerized analyzers and oscilloscopes and is recorded on a highly sensitive chart recorder. Other equipment is also used to monitor respiration, the autonomic nervous system (galvanic skin resistance), changes in blood flow (plethysmograph), heart (electrocardiograph), subtle vibrations in the skin (microtremor), so as to measure other effects of chakra stimulation on the body and to make comparisons and interpretations.

Motoyama has used his equipment extensively to determine diseases in the body.[2] In one case he measured a woman who was to have a uterine tumour removed a week later. Measurements on his AMI machine (refer to the chapter entitled "Evidence for the Existence of Nadis") showed imbalance in the related meridians. The pattern of energy measured by the 'chakra instrument' in front of the uterus (swadhisthana chakra) was much greater than and quite different from normal. Motoyama's research indicates that there is a definite correspondence between physical disease and disturbance in the energy of the chakra traditionally said by yogis to control that part of the physical body.

Activity in the chakras

Motoyama has also measured chakra activity in normal subjects and recorded and compared readings in subjects practising yoga versus untrained, control subjects.[3] He found that in an untrained subject concentrating on ajna chakra there was no change recorded by the electrodes. The lines on the recording paper remained flat before, during and after concentration.

A subject who had been practising stimulation of swadhisthana chakra for some time showed a great deal of activation of the centre, and much greater than in the control subject who showed none at all. Large amplitude waves were seen before, during and after concentration, indicating activation; however, there was no change during the period for concentration, indicating lack of control over the centre. This compares with another subject who had been practising yoga for five years and who evidenced a marked rise in electrical activity from ajna chakra but only during the time of concentration. The results indicate that he had developed control over his ajna chakra.

'Chakra instrument' studies have been made with several yogis.[4] Dr A.K. Tebecis, a former professor at Canberra University, Australia, who has studied yoga throughout Asia and who claims to have experienced astral projection due to the awakening of kundalini, was tested on the 'chakra instrument'. Dr Tebecis concentrates on anahata chakra during meditation and also has a chronic digestive disorder. The AMI revealed instability in the nadis involved in digestion, in the manipura chakra area, and also in those related to the swadhisthana chakra area. When the 'chakra instrument' was used to measure manipura and anahata, no change was found at manipura. Anahata concentration revealed considerable intensification of energy during the period of concentration.

Two unusual findings have also been reported by Motoyama. In one case, not only did the subject develop a more intense electrical reading during concentration on manipura, but also had the subjective experience that psychic energy was being ejected from manipura. During this time the positive electrical potential vanished, but only during the time of her subjective sensation, and would reappear again as soon as the feeling of emission vanished.

Motoyama states, "One might surmise that the psi energy generated a negative electrical potential which neutralized the positive electrical charge. However, it is also possible to postulate the creation of a new physical energy. In fact, it is my opinion that the psi energy emitted from R.B.'s manipura chakra actually extinguished the surrounding physical energy. I take this stand because the positive potential was precisely neutralized and because there was never any appearance of a negative potential."[5]

The second case involves a subject who concentrated on anahata chakra. As the subject relaxed, the chakra area was seen to be activated. She was then asked to concentrate on the anahata area and it was arranged that any time she had the subjective experience of psi energy emission she was to press a button which caused a mark to be made on the chart. It was found that when this mark appeared the photoelectric cell signalled the presence of a weak light being generated in the light-proof room. Her chakra monitor also detected electrical energy of high potential and frequency.

Motoyama states that these findings imply that psychic energy working in anahata chakra may be able to create energy in the physical dimension (light, electricity, etc.) It appears that whatever energy is being produced in a developed and refined chakra circuit is capable of extinguishing or creating energy in the physical dimension, which supports the yogic view of chakras as transducers, converting psychic energy into physical energy and back. Motoyama feels that if further research substantiated his findings, then the law of Conservation of Energy, as one of the basic foundation stones of modern physics, will have to be revised.

The verification of an energy at the psychic plane which, though of unknown source and substance, can influence matter, has been long claimed by yogis. It is also thought to be the basis of healing and of all sciences

in which mind is used to control matter. Yogis even state that the world is a manifestation of mind, a view which is now being supported more and more by physicists, especially those working with the subatomic particles that make up all of matter and which lie midway between matter and pure energy (prana).
Motoyama states, "I feel that the continuation of research into the nature of psi energies, by many others as well as myself, will lead to considerable change in our views of matter, of mind and body, of human beings, and of the world itself."[6]

The psychic level

Objective evidence for the existence of the chakras also appears to have been found by kinesiologist Valerie Hunt and her associates at UCLA in America.[7] Assisted by Rosalyn Bruyere, a psychic 'aura reader', Hunt used a number of measurements in order to study the body's field emission when it is being stimulated by deep muscle massage (Rolfing). This was prompted by an earlier observation that after Rolfing and meditation there was an increase in the electromyographic baseline.
Hunt and associates utilized electromyographic equipment (EMG) which measures the steady, low voltage of muscular activity plus several other instruments. Electrodes were attached to eight sites, including chakra locations such as the crown (sahasrara), eyebrow centre (ajna), throat (vishuddhi), heart (anahata), base of the spine and acupuncture points on the foot and knee. The sites for the electrodes were in places where muscle activity was minimal and, therefore, electrical readings would indicate energy from a different source. The electrodes were placed on the body in consultation with the 'aura reader'.
The individual being experimented on was given Rolfing (deep muscle massage), designed to liberate deeper subconscious tension, and, therefore, theoretically able to effect chakra activity. As the massage progressed the EMG readings were recorded on one track of a two-tracked tape recorder. Simultaneously, while isolated in another room and oblivious to the EMG and subject's reports, Bruyere recorded on the second track her observations of psychic activity in terms of colour change at the various centres. Hunt was able to question the aura reader via a separate audio system so that no clue as to what the subject was experiencing or what was going on at the EMG level could be detected by the psychic. At the same time the subject related his experience which was tape-recorded using a second microphone, and any similarity between his experience, the symptoms of chakra activation and the EMG recording were noted.
It was quickly evident in the central monitoring room where Hunt was sitting, that the EMG changes and the distinctive wave forms being recorded correlated with the colours reported by the psychic person, as did the experience of the subject. Later analysis, whether by wave form, Fourierfrequency analysis or sonogram, produced consistently the same pattern of results.
Hunt acknowledged that the possible interpretations of this data are staggering. The radiations were taken directly from the body surface, quantitatively measured in a natural state and were isolated by scientifically accepted data resolution procedures. The study concluded that there had been direct correspondence in every instance throughout all recordings between the distinctive wave form and the psychic's description of the colour emanating from the chakra. For example, every time a medium-large, sharp deflection with single or double peaks at the top occurred, the psychic reported the colour blue, while red corresponded to large, sharp clumps of regular and irregular spikes of short duration interspersed with plateaux. Yellow was a broad, smooth wave resembling an uneven sine wave.
The relationship between the emotional states and the colours was also accurate. Emotions, imagery, interpersonal relations and the state of resiliency and plasticity of the connective tissue are related to the colour and the state of the aura as seen by the psychic.
It is an interesting fact that in early Rolfing sessions the chakras appeared to be uneven, small, low in frequency and amplitude and with indiscriminate or dark primary colours.
As the technique continued the chakras became large, even in size, and of lighter colour, while the wave forms were of higher amplitude and frequency.
Some chakras which had been closed, opened, producing kaleidoscopic colour effects, e.g. dark blue, yellow, redorange and olive green. By the fifth hour of Rolfing all subjects had a clear blue aura. By the seventh and eighth hours the colours were predominantly light and blended, for example, peach, pink, ice blue and cream. Higher frequencies were associated with pleasant experiences.

Developing our psyche

Hunt's research is important at several levels. It firstly supports the claims of yogis and psychics that other levels of perception, more subtle and yet intimately connected with the physical body, do in fact exist. Though it has been called extrasensory perception it appears rather to be an extension of the normal range of perception of physical events into the more subtle.
According to yogis, development of ajna chakra and the pineal/thalamic area of the brain, plus relaxed concentration of mind, allows us to see things which most of us miss because of gross physical and mental tensions and a dissipated, distracted state of mind. There is nothing miraculous, abnormal or

supernormal about psychic phenomena. Most of us just do not look at things long enough to allow the subtle to register in our brains. We see something and are immediately distracted, thinking that there is nothing else to see or learn from a situation. But if we take our time we can learn much more.
We know that vision is our major information processing system and therefore tied into many other neurological systems. Defects in the visual system are now linked to other problems such as allergies, anxiety, insomnia, postural problems, and a whole range of physical and psychological problems.[8] Connecticut optometrist Albert Shankman is quoted as saying, "The skill of seeing relationships is a principal object of visual training. Visual training is essentially brain training."[9] Shankman and others have observed that visual flow and flexibility are associated with a more flexible, creative thought style.
Yoga follows the same principle, for example in trataka, an essential component of kundalini yoga. Trataka teaches us to gaze at things without preconceptions and to allow the information to impinge on our brains, to allow the connections time to come together and the inner knowledge, the processed information within the brain, time to formulate itself fully and rise up to the conscious plane. This is what yogis mean when they say that yoga balances the external and the internal, the right and left sides of the brain, ida and pingala, and awakens faculties that lie dormant within us all but which we do not know exist and which we do not develop. Psychic vision, a side-effect of kundalini yoga and part of the awakening of intuition, inner vision and inner knowledge, is one of these capacities. All it means is that we are relaxed and we take our time to look at things without preconception. Hunt's research verifies that this faculty is not a myth and not confined just to yogis practising sadhana for years in isolation in the Himalayas, but is also verifiable within the confines of a laboratory.

Verifying the chakras

The work of Motoyama and Hunt points to the fact that within the physical body there are locations which, though they may not have any obvious physical or structural demarcation, have definite functional characteristics which differentiate them from other parts of the body. It verifies the fact that the yogic descriptions of these points correspond to physical emanations in the case of Motoyama's research and psychic emanations in the case of Hunt's research.
We see then that the chakra locations have both a physical component and a psychic component. This scientific description fits the yogic definition of chakras as vortices of energy, the interacting points of the most powerful psychic and physical forces which control our total human existence. The studies also confirm that the traditional chakra locations, when activated, are related to emanations of light and colour, and to emotions and experiences which are subtle and usually stored in the subconscious mind, beyond our usual conscious capacity. When we concentrate and focus psychic energy, chitta shakti, on the chakra, or if we manipulate the areas of the body under its control, by asana or massage, for example, we can stimulate activity at both the physical and psychic levels of that centre.
What lies at the basis of these energy emanations at the neurological and mental levels, how these forces interact to control our psychophysiology, behaviour and experience, still requires much more research. What we do know is that the concept of chakras has a definite psychophysiological foundation, that they affect our body, emotions and mind, and that they produce both physical and psychic energy which can be measured and quantified. There is something within the body of man, which yogis called chakra, awaiting our discovery and awakening.

The Cosmic Trigger

We stand on the shores of a vast universe which continues to amaze us and inspire us with awe and wonder every time a new discovery is made. Despite recent developments in rockets, computers, atomic power and other marvels of science, we are painfully ignorant of the world in which we live. We are even more ignorant of our inner universe which for some reason we have forgotten about and ignore, despite a pressing inner need to uncover the truth of our existence. Since the concept of kundalini has been introduced in the west, various groups of scientific and yogic minded people have sought to understand and explain this phenomenon which promises to be our rocketship into inner space, to lift us out of the confines and limitations of time and space so as to experience ourselves as we really are. Strangely enough, this inner experience also promises to unveil many of the outer mysteries baffling scientists and researchers in many fields today.
Recent developments in neurophysiology and meditation research have outlined a possible explanation for kundalini which unifies both its physical and psychic aspects. This research outlines a comprehensive approach to understanding how meditation can release energies within our nervous system, unlocking latent capacities and speeding up our evolution at both the physical and consciousness levels. This allows us to perceive the universe from a new and broader perspective, to see things from a more total point of view and to understand more about life and ourselves.

The physio-kundalini syndrome

One researcher who developed an ingenious method to measure bodily change during meditation and the awakening of kundalini is Itzhak Bentov. In his book *Stalking the Wild Pendulum* he has set out an original and also very yogic understanding of consciousness and matter, one which can very neatly explain kundalini from the point of view of physics. He also discusses a model by which we can understand the kundalini experience in physiological terms.

Bentov states that, "the human nervous system has a tremendous latent capacity for evolution. This evolution can be accelerated by meditative techniques, or it can occur spontaneously in an unsuspecting individual. In both cases, a sequence of events is triggered, causing sometimes strong and unusual bodily reactions and unusual psychological states. Some of those people who meditate may suspect that these reactions are somehow connected with meditation. Others, however, who develop these symptoms spontaneously may panic and seek medical advice . . . Unfortunately, however, western medicine is presently not equipped to handle these problems. Strangely, in spite of the intensity of the symptoms, little or no physical pathology can be found."[1]

Bentov estimates, on the basis of discussions with psychiatrists, that as many as 25 or 30 percent of all institutionalized schizophrenics belong to this category, a tremendous waste of human potential. There is a vast area of the human psyche which we are totally ignorant of, which we do not experience consciously in our lives, and which we are, therefore, helpless to deal with adequately if something goes wrong. Bentov feels that symptoms do not occur in the healthy, relaxed state, but only when energy reaches tensions in the body. This agrees with the yogic view that we must prepare ourselves for awakening by a long period of preparatory sadhana to avoid unpleasant results.

Bentov states that we urgently need modes that will allow us to understand kundalini in terms which make sense to us. As a result of this need, Bentov has delineated a unique and brilliant model of the meditation/kundalini process so that doctors, psychiatrists and psychotherapists can become aware of this possibility and develop more benign methods of dealing with this situation. More knowledge about the physical basis of spiritual knowledge is required in medical and scientific circles in order to expand our concept of man.

Measuring the waves in the brain

As we start to practise meditation we initially experience its calming, relaxing and stabilizing effects. Prolonged practice, and especially the more vigorous forms of meditative practice, take us far beyond these preliminary changes which many modern researchers have been stressing as the main aim and effect of meditation. After some time, actual psychophysiological changes take place and amongst these there is a change in the mode of functioning of our nervous system. In order to measure these psychophysiological changes Bentov used a modified ballistocardiograph, a machine which measures small bodily motions accompanying the motion of blood throughout the circulatory system.[2] He records, "A subject sits on a chair between two metal plates, one above the head and one under the seat, five to ten centimetres away from the body. The two plates of the capacitor are part of a tuned circuit. The movement of the subject will modulate the field between the two plates. The signal is processed and fed into a single channel recorder which registers both the motion of the chest due to respiration and the movement of the body reacting to the motion of the blood in the heart-aorta system."[3]

Bentov states that the spinal cord can be thought of as a spring which, during meditation, reacts to the movement of blood into the heart and circulatory system. The heart pumps blood into the large blood vessel called the aorta. The aorta is curved on top (at the level of the bottom of the neck) and bifurcated at the bottom (in the lower abdomen). Every time blood enters the aorta it moves upward towards the head and this gives a minute upward push to the upper part of the body. The blood then moves downward to strike the bifurcation of the aorta, gently pushing the body downward. This movement is called micromotion and the movement recorded on the ballistocardiograph is only in the order of 0.003 to 0.009 millimetres, a very minute amount.

This gentle upward and downward movement has the tendency to oscillate the whole body, spine and skull up and down. The natural rhythm of this oscillation is 7 cycles/ second (7 Hertz, Hz). Of course in the normal situation we do not feel such minute micromotion, however, in the deep stillness of profound meditation even the slightest and most subtle movement of the body or thought creates ripples within the nervous system which, to our introverted consciousness, become magnified and disturb inward progress. Yogis have always stressed that the most important preliminary ingredient for meditation is to develop a straight and strong spinal cord through asana and to gradually develop stillness of the body, nervous system and mind through pranayama. Through Bentov's model we can now see that this is because immobility of body, breath and mind sets the stage for the production of rhythmic waves within the spine, skull and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF).

When subjects are in a deep meditative state, Bentov's machine measures an almost pure, regular, S-shaped sine wave of large amplitude and moving at approximately 7 cycles/second. This is opposed to an irregular wave in the baseline resting state before and after meditation. Something happens in meditation which does not normally occur in most of our waking, dreaming or sleeping lives. At the same time we enter a hypometabolic state in which our breathing rate slows down and the oxygen need of our tissues lessens. We should note that it is also possible to produce a sine wave on the ballistocardiograph by stopping our breath; however, we quickly develop oxygen deficiency and have to overbreathe to restore balance. In meditation, however, this does not occur; we are balanced at all levels.

The oscillating circuits

The up and down movement of the body produced by the heart during meditation affects the brain which is floating in its protective bony and fluid casing, the cranium and CSF. According to Bentov, this micromotion up and down sets up acoustical and possible electrical plane waves reverberating in the skull. Mechanical stimulation may be converted into electrical vibrations.

The acoustical plane waves are focused within the third and lateral ventricles, small cave-like, CSF filled structures deep within the brain. The plane waves activate and drive standing waves into the ventricles. While the body stays in meditation, the frequency of waves within the ventricles of the brain will remain locked to the heart/aorta pulsation. Bentov felt that these vibrations within the brain are responsible for the sounds yogis hear in meditation. This aspect of meditation is called nada yoga, listening to and following the inner sounds, and is said to herald the coming of kundalini.

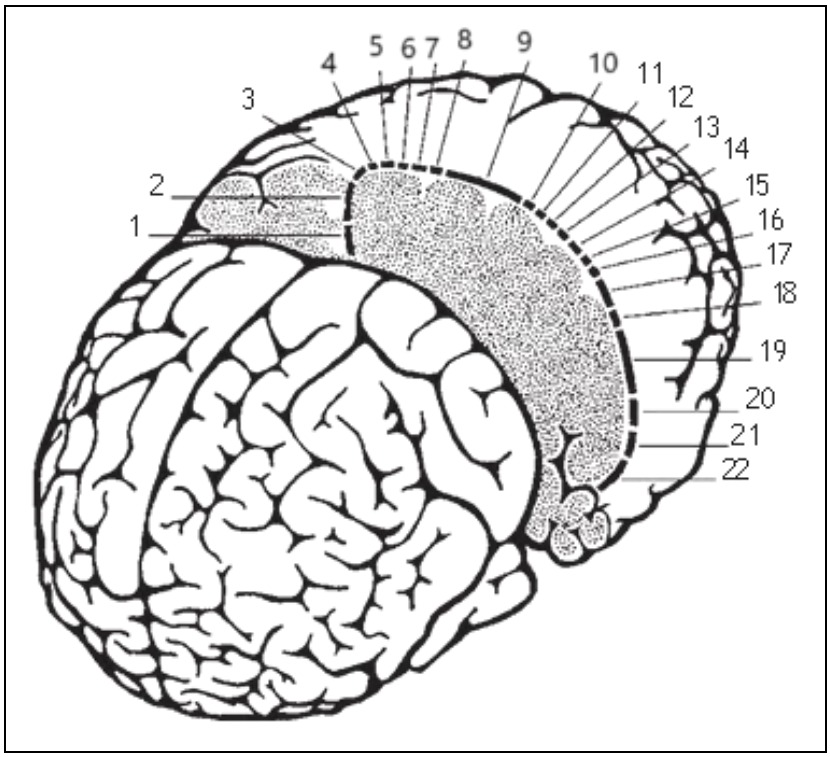
The loop circuit

According to Bentov the standing waves in the ventricles are within the audio and superauditory ranges. They stimulate the cerebral cortex mechanically, eventually resulting in a stimulus travelling in a closed loop around each hemisphere. The lateral ventricle lies just under the corpus callosum, the part of the brain connecting the two cerebral hemispheres. The roof of the lateral ventricle acts as the taut skin on a drum which moves rapidly up and down and thereby produces mechanical waves in the ventricles which stimulate the sensory cortex lying just above the corpus callosum.

We can understand the effect of this stimulation by looking at the diagram of the cross section of the brain (see figure 3). Waves would commence at number 1 and travel down to number 22 and back to number 1 again creating a loop circuit. As the current returns to the starting point it stimulates the pleasure centres in the various areas of the brain which surround the lateral ventricle, such as in the cingulate gyrus, lateral hypothalamus, hippocampus and amygdala areas, all part of the limbic system, and this may give rise to the bliss and ecstasy reported by meditators whose shakti awakens. The sensory current travels around the cortex at about 7 cycles per second.

Figure 3: Cross section of the brain revealing the sensory cortex and indicating the body as mapped along the post central gyrus. This is called the sensory homunculus – the symbolic man lying within the brain. After: Pennfield and Rassmussen, The Human Cerebral Cortex, MacMillan, New York, 1950.

1) Toes
2) Ankle
3) Knee
4) Hip
5) Trunk
6) Shoulder
7) Elbow
8) Wrist
9) Hand
10) Little finger
11) Ring finger
12) Middle finger
13) Index finger
14) Thumb
15) Neck
16) Brow
17) Eyelid & eyeball
18) Face
19) Lips
20) Jaw
21) Tongue
22) Larynx



Bentov theorizes that stimulation of the corpus callosum will in turn stimulate the sensory cortex to produce the sensations of something moving in the body from the feet, up the spine, up over the head and then down the abdomen and pelvis. It is this experience which many people associate with the awakening of kundalini.
The experience of movement in the spine and body has been reported in many cases of the awakening of shakti or energy within the nervous and nadi systems. From areas as far apart as India, China, Africa and America, the symptoms are often similar if not the same. Energy is felt to rise upward and these sensations must be handled in progressive sequence in the sensory cortex. We can also theorize that if we sit in padmasana (lotus pose) or siddhasana/siddha yoni asana (accomplished pose for men and women) that we may short-circuit the sensations in the legs so that we subjectively experience the movement as commencing in or near mooladhara.
In normal situations, motor and sensory impulses usually travel in straight lines, either into or out of the brain and via the thalamus. However, in meditation we introvert and cut ourselves off from outside stimulation (pratyahara). This also tends to develop a loop circuit.
We should note that sensory signals come to the cortex through the thalamus, the area of the brain in front of the pineal gland that we can associate with the highest functioning of ajna chakra. And it is said that ajna chakra must be stimulated if kundalini is rising because of its direct connection to mooladhara.
Bentov felt that the movement of waves through the cortex is responsible for the effects of the awakened kundalini and for internal experience. From our point of view this may not be the actual kundalini experience, which transcends all bodily sensations, but would correspond to the awakening of prana shakti which ultimately leads to the kundalini experience. The gradual development of the brain may take many years before the loop circuit and the various connections develop, and enough energy can be generated to actually stimulate all the circuits involved and required.

Psychic circuits

As a result of the circular currents in the brain, Bentov states that a pulsating magnetic field is produced in each hemisphere of the order of 10^{-9} gauss. On the right side of the brain the field is from front to back, north to south, and on the left side, south to north. This would correspond to ida and pingala at this level of body energy. Bentov feels that the interaction of these waves with the environment may be responsible for the psychic experiences which are often felt as a by-product of systematic and deep yogic sadhana. He states his findings as follows: "This magnetic field – radiated by the head acting as an antenna – interacts with the electric and magnetic fields already in the environment. We may consider the head as simultaneously a transmitting and receiving antenna, tuned to a particular one of the several resonant frequencies of the brain. Environmental fields may thus be fed back to the brain, thus modulating that resonant frequency. The brain will interpret this modulation as useful information".[4]
It is interesting to note that the rhythmic magnetic pulsation of the brain which is set up in meditation at 7 cycles/second is almost the same as Earth's magnetic pulsation whose doughnut-shaped field has a strength of 0.5 gauss. These extra low frequency (ELF) waves have a predominant frequency of about 7.5 cycles per second, and this is called the Schumann resonance. Another interesting point is that the brain wave frequency of 7 cycles/second is the region between alpha waves and theta waves. This is the borderline between waking and sleeping, where we are most relaxed, and if we can stay awake in meditation, it sets the brain up for creativity and intuition. It is the time we are most psychically receptive. Professor Michael Persinger of the Laurentian University Psychophysiology Laboratory hypothesizes that ELF waves may serve as the carriers for information connected with psychic phenomena.[5] This fits in with Bentov's theory that our brain's magnetic pulse of 7 cycles/second resonates with the environment to either transmit or receive information.

The five oscillating systems

Up to this point Bentov tells us there are five oscillating systems tuned to each other:

1. *The heart-aorta system,* producing an oscillation in the spine and skull of 7 cycles/second which accelerates:
2. *the skull and brain up and down,* producing acoustical plane waves (KHz frequencies) which create:
3. *standing waves within* the ventricles of the brain in the audio and above ranges which stimulate:
4. *a loop circuit in the sensory cortex* at 7 cycles/second which result in:
5. *a magnetic field* of opposite polarity, pulsating at 7 cycles/ second, and interacting with the environmental fields, especially the ELF field which is resonating at about 7.5 cycles/second.

As we meditate over a prolonged period, we begin to progress and lock in more and more of these systems so that eventually all the systems of the brain begin to harmonize and resonate at around the same frequency. We can speculate that this ultimately unifies the whole brain and results in unlocking of our dormant potential, a quantum leap to a new field of experience that yogis tell us is powered by the explosive release of kundalini. Yogis state that if we can sit still for three hours, completely immobile and aware, we will awaken our internal energies and enter into samadhi. Bentov's model explains this.

Another interesting point is that Bentov feels that these changes in the brain most probably start in the right hemisphere, because many meditative practices develop the non-verbal, feeling, intuitive, spatial right brain, balancing out the almost constant dominance of the logical, reasoning, rational, linearly-thinking left brain in our day-to-day extrovert, tension-filled, energy-demanding existence. He came to this conclusion because many meditators he talked to felt their experiences started on the left side of their bodies which is governed by the right brain.[6] This agrees with the work of D'Aquili who posits that inner experience is governed by activity in the right brain.[7]

Kindling the kundalini

We know that a log on a low flame is likely to blaze up suddenly on its own, even after the original fire goes out. A threshold point is reached and internal reactions take over spontaneously. The same mechanisms are thought to occur in the nervous system to lead up to a series of events analogous to the kindling of wood. Scientists are using this model to explain such diverse phenomena as everyday learning memory, epilepsy, the radical mood swings of manic depression and kundalini.

The kindling phenomenon was first identified by C.V. Goddard and his associates at Waterloo University in Canada in 1969.[8] They observed that repeated, periodic, low-intensity electrical stimulation of animal brains leads to stronger brain activity, particularly in the limbic system, the part of the brain that handles emotions. For example, stimulating the amygdala (part of the limbic system) once daily, for half a second, has no effect at first, but after two or three weeks, produces convulsions. Goddard also observed that kindling can cause relatively permanent changes in brain excitability. Animals can have seizures for as long as a year after the initial kindling period.

According to John Gaito of York University, over a period of time the bursts of electrical activity kindle similar patterns in adjacent brain regions.[9] Also the threshold is progressively lowered so that smaller doses of electricity trigger convulsions.

It should be understood that mild continuous electrical stimulation does not cause kindling, rather it causes adaptation and tolerance. The stimulation must be intermittent, preferably every twenty-four hours, to be effective.

Robert Post found that kindling can also be induced by drugs such as cocaine or other anaesthetics which stimulate the limbic system.[10] He found that using these stimulants led to changes of behaviour such as increased aggression.

Apart from providing a model for epilepsy, which we know is sometimes associated with mystical insight, and psychosis, which can be thought of as prematurely awakened kundalini activity in one of the chakras, kindling can explain how meditation exerts its effects on our brain and psyche. According to Marilyn Ferguson, "Analogies of the kindling effect and meditation effects – especially of the dramatic kundalini phenomena – are interesting. Obviously, most human subjects don't perceive their experiences as pathological, although they may be somewhat unnerving. The effects typically occur after a history of regular meditation and in an unthreatening setting. There is no onset of seizures in the classic sense, and the nervous system effects appear to be positive over the long run."[11]

Bernard Gluek of the Hartford Institute of Living speculates that mantra meditation might set off a resonance effect in the limbic brain.[12] Mantra repetition is the most obvious form of meditation to be analogous to kindling; however, if we look at Bentov's model, any form which involves sitting absolutely motionless and developing introspection will do the same.

According to Bentov, the loop circuit in the sensory cortex set up by sitting immobile in meditation may stimulate the pleasure centres in the amygdala, the part of the brain most amenable to kindling. This would, over a period of time, lead to permanent changes within the nervous system in an ongoing and progressive manner. This is the aim of meditation and all masters of yoga and the inner arts and sciences tell us that for success, the most important ingredient is regularity of practise and persistence. Whether our experiences in meditation are good or bad is of no consequence. They are all just steps on the way to higher experience, part of the process of preparation for kundalini awakening.

Two important points should be noted about kindling. The first is that it induces relatively permanent changes and the second is that it increases activity in the brain. It steps up the energy processes. This fits in with the theory that meditation can energize the nadis so as to send energy to various centres to awaken higher functions within those centres in order to take them to a higher octave of activity by supplying them with a better energy source.

Meditation and the brain

When studying kundalini we must remember that there are as many methods to awaken it as there are people practising, in fact there may be more methods than people. The four basic methods studied by modern research are raja yoga, kriya yoga, zazen and transcendental meditation. Basically these techniques involve one or more of the following: sitting, breath awareness, and mantra. Yogis normally divide meditation into either the

relaxation type or concentration type of practice. However, we also know that whichever technique we choose we will have to first develop relaxation and then allow the internal process to unfold.
Most of the brain research into meditation has focused on brain waves, which are divided into four main groups and which can be generalized as follows:

1. ***Beta*:** extroversion, concentration, logic-orientated thought, worry and tension.
2. ***Alpha*:** relaxation, drowsiness.
3. ***Theta*:** dreaming, creativity.
4. ***Delta*:** deep sleep.

Most meditation techniques show that meditators, however, usually develop relaxation in meditation, with alpha waves being predominant and occasional theta waves, which are different to those seen in sleep, occurring in more advanced meditators.[13–15] This result, the basis of meditation's use in such psychosomatic diseases as high blood pressure and in anxiety, has probably resulted from either relaxation techniques or because the meditators were mainly novices.
Occasionally, in the laboratory, a researcher stumbles on findings which seem to run contrary to the claims of meditation as a relaxation method. In this situation the meditator moves through the usual relaxation process, sinking into alpha and theta, but at this point something startling happens. He again develops beta waves, despite the fact that he is introverted, and these are usually big, rhythmic, synchronized high amplitude waves, unlike the normal small amplitude found in the random chaotic brain waves of normal subjects.
This occurrence was first seen in 1955 by Das and Gastant who studied kriya yoga.[16] It was later seen and confirmed by Banquet, who studied transcendental meditation and found that after the theta waves, rhythmic beta waves were produced, present over the whole scalp and "the most striking topographical alteration was the synchronization of anterior and posterior channels."[17] The whole brain was pulsating synchronously, rhythmically and in an integrated fashion. This was subjectively experienced as deep meditation or transcendence.
Banquet states that, "We must deduce, therefore, that the EEG changes of meditation are independent of the interaction between the subject and the outer world but produced by the specific mental activity of the practice. The initiation of the loop between cortex, thalamo-cortical co-ordinating system and subcortical generator . . . could account for the different alterations."[18] This agrees with Bentov's theory of a loop circuit being responsible for the kundalini experience. Levine, studying transcendental meditation, confirmed Banquet's findings of coherence and synchronization of brain waves, both within each cerebral hemisphere from front to back and between both hemispheres.[19] Corby and his associates found that using tantric meditation there was arousal of the nervous system rather than relaxation.[20] The episode of sudden autonomic nervous system activation was characterized by the meditator as approaching the yogic ecstatic state of intense concentration. Corby's subjects experienced: rushes of energy; chills, laughter, changing and varied emotions; early life flashes; total energy absorption; yearning to be one with the object of ideation; a great sense of merger and understanding of experience and its meaning.[21] Corby's meditators meditated, on the average, for more than three hours per day and used more advanced techniques than usually studied in the laboratory.

Kundalini in the laboratory

Though it may be difficult, if not impossible, to record the actual kundalini experience in the laboratory (either because such advanced meditators do not usually talk about their own experiences, or because the laboratory setting and environment is not correct, or because our machinery might interfere with or explode under the force of the actual experience), the research findings do tend to support Bentov's and the kindling model for kundalini.
In the studies of meditation in which activation of the nervous system was found, there was generalized coherence and integration of the brain and/or blissful, ecstatic experiences. The experiences of awakening of shakti recorded within the laboratory setting and their physiological correlates agree with the yogic theory that awakening takes place in mooladhara chakra and travels up to ajna chakra, affecting the deep, primitive, animalistic and energizing circuits within the R-complex and limbic system of the brain, near the medulla oblongata. Energy flows from here to the thalamus to stimulate all the areas of the cerebral cortex simultaneously and thereby creates a loop circuit which gradually awakens latent and unused activity within other areas of the brain. The whole brain begins to pulse as a single unit as energy pours into the central controlling area of ajna chakra.
We can understand that as we progress in meditation, we set the stage for the eventual awakening of shakti within the nadis, chakras and brain. An explosion occurs as we reach the threshold required for kindling to take place. Once we reach this concentrated, integrated state, neurological circuits take over and spontaneously begin to stimulate themselves, so that the energy liberated awakens new centres in the brain, creating a transformed state of awareness and being at a new and higher level of energy. The process of

awakening of shakti has begun.
From this point on as long as we continue our practise, the process of unfoldment continues because once kindling has taken place the effects are relatively permanent. We develop more and more purity and strength, so that we can handle the internal experiences as they arise for longer and longer periods of time, until final awakening of kundalini takes place.

Cross-Cultural Evidence

Kundalini is a transcendental phenomena, one which lies outside the realms of time and space. We cannot understand how powerful the experience of kundalini awakening really is, however, we can see its effects on our lives and the effect that awakening has had in terms of changes in the functioning of society and in various cultures. For example, the effect of kundalini awakening is said by many researchers and yogis to be at the basis of the experiences had by Christ, Buddha, Krishna, Rama, Mohammed, Mahavir and various other great religious and spiritual figures from history.
While researchers continue to scientifically probe the phenomena itself, its components, its related events and ramifications, and its ability to affect machines, another type of researcher is examining the phenomena both in its social setting and anthropologically. As a universal phenomena we can see kundalini everywhere, in every culture and at all times. John White states: "Although the word kundalini comes from the yogic tradition nearly all the world's major religions, spiritual paths and genuine occult traditions see something akin to the kundalini experience as having significance in divinizing a person. The word itself may not appear in the traditions, but the concept is there nevertheless, wearing a different name yet recognizable as a key to attaining a God-like stature."[1]

Altered states

Kundalini induces an altered state of consciousness (ASC), that is, it takes us to realms of inner experience beyond those normally accessible. Arnold M. Ludwig writes, "Beneath man's thin veneer of consciousness lies a relatively uncharted realm of mental activity, the nature and function of which have been neither systematically explored or adequately conceptualized."[2]
Ludwig and other ASC researchers cite daydreaming, sleep and dreams, hypnosis, sensory deprivation, psychosis, hysterical states of dissociation and depersonalization, pharmacologically induced mental aberrations, sleeplessness, fasting and meditation as examples of ASCs. Anything can induce an ASC, any place or event can trigger a change in consciousness, however, usually we have to manoeuvre ourselves or use some agent to bypass the so-called 'normal' functioning of the brain. We can say that our normal state of consciousness is the one in which we spend most of our waking lives.
There are many people, however, who believe that the state of consciousness most people exist in is very limited and fixed, itself a retarded, degenerate and unhealthy state which induces fear of change, neurosis and disease. In terms of our inner experiences we are like retarded dwarfs, like the flea kept under a glass who, after hitting its head on the glass a number of times, ceases to jump hundreds of times its own height but rather, even when the glass is removed, continues to hop at a reduced capacity far below its innate potential. Yogis claim that we are like the flea, pathetic shadows of our former selves and far less than our potential, confined by vague fears and illusions, ghosts and memories in the mind. We are much more than we think we are.
The kundalini experience is at the peak of human evolution. It is the absolute and final state attainable by man, the experience in which he realizes and merges with his pristine glory; the ultimate ASC. All other experiences fall short of this and are mere steppingstones on the way, making up the repertoire of our lesser human lives. The real yogi or swami is the master of all realms of consciousness and can move into and out of any state he wants at will, depending on the degree of his skill and mastery. Various cultures have developed ways and means to attain these different realms of consciousness, each varying in its capacity to do so.
According to Erica Bourguignon, an anthropologist at Ohio State University, 90 percent of human societies practise some kind of institutionalized ritual to achieve altered states of consciousness.[3] For example, there is the solitary-vision quest of Sioux warriors, the hallucinogen-powered flights of South American shaman, the dream oracles of the Senoi people of Malaysia, the tribal dances of the Samo people of New Guinea, and the whirling dances of the Sufi dervish, to name but a few of the better known societies.
In the West we use alcohol and drugs, revival meetings, rock concerts and discotheques with their mind and logicnumbing, trance-inducing, megadecible music and 'tribal' dance. Are we so far from 'primitive' societies? Bourguignon wonders, "The fact that they are nearly universal must mean that such states are very important to human beings." The need for attaining higher states of consciousness seems to be as basic as the need for eating or sleeping.
Somehow we have forgotten at our conscious, normal level of consciousness, that we have immense potential and that we can achieve bliss, knowledge and inner experiences which are more satisfying than the

monotonous, humdrum existence we lead at present. Somewhere in our subconscious minds, at another level of consciousness, we know that something is missing and this knowledge nags at us. We want to get away from it all, to have a holiday (from the root for Holy day). From this there arises an instinctive and irrepressible urge and drive to fulfil ourselves and to attain higher and better states and experiences, though we may often fail to achieve them or real inner satisfaction. The alcohol ritual is one example of a self-defeating and destructive attempt to achieve true joy and inner bliss.

It appears that our methods are incorrect for attaining inner fulfilment, satisfaction and security. We have lost the keys and can no longer gain access to the higher and transcendental. We have been thrown out of the Garden of Eden. It is for this reason that so many people have turned to yoga, meditation and the transcendental sciences for the means and techniques to enlarge their repertoire of experience and to attain insight into themselves and reality.

Kundalini, a universal phenomenon

Reports have come from all over the world indicating that there is a psychophysiological phenomenon existing outside the barriers of social, cultural, religious, geographical and temporal boundaries, and which resembles the phenomenon called kundalini by the yogis and sages of India.

In Northwest Botswana, Africa, the *!Kung* people of the Kalahari Desert dance for many hours to heat up the *n/um* so that the *!kia* state can be obtained. This state of transcendence resembles that in many yogic texts on kundalini in which states of consciousness beyond the ordinary, and participation in eternity, are described. One tribesman reports: "You dance, dance, dance. Then the *n/um* lifts you in your belly and lifts you in your back, and then you start to shiver . . . it's hot. Your eyes are open but you don't look around; you hold your eyes still and look straight ahead. But when you get into *!kia* you're looking around because you see everything."[4]

Judith Cooper writes about the *!Kung*: "In one of the darker corners of the Dark Continent the *!Kung* people of the Kalahari keep in touch with the gods. Two or three nights a week the men dance around a fire, graceful as leopards, to the sonorous drone of the women's chants. Soon the mood turns solemn, and the night air swells with unseen presences. Sweat rolls down the dancers' bodies like sweet rain, as the *n/um*, the healing power, starts to boil. The moment of transcendence is painful. When the inner fire shoots from their bellies up their spines, the dancers shiver and tremble, fall to the ground or go rigid as stone. Some of them dance into the fire and out again, perfect as gods, their feet unburned. They can see into the essence of things now, even into the insides of other people, where malignant ghosts feed on diseased livers or prevent the conception of sons. Laying their healing hands on the sick, they bid the *n/um* to drive out the forces of darkness."[5]

In the Chinese Taoist tradition it is said that when prana or *chi*, the vital principle, has accumulated in the lower belly, it bursts out and begins to flow in the main psychic channels causing involuntary movements and sensations such as pain, itching, coldness, warmth, weightlessness, heaviness, roughness, smoothness, internal lights and sound and the feeling of inner movement. It may cause the physical body to brighten and even illuminate a dark room. Yin Shih Tsu reported that he felt heat travel from the base of the spine to the top of the head and then down over his face and throat to his stomach.[6]

These kinds of reports tally exactly with the experiences of yogis who describe kundalini as travelling up the spine with heat and light or with the surging energy of a snake preparing to strike. A classical description of kundalini from the yogic tradition comes from Swami Narayananda: "There is a burning up the back and over the whole body. Kundalini's entrance into sushumna occurs with pain in the back . . . One feels a creeping sensation from the toes and sometimes it shakes the whole body. The rising is felt like that of an ant creeping up slowly over the body towards the head. Its ascent is felt like the wiggling of a snake or a bird hopping from place to place."[7] This also sounds very much like the description of the so-called 'primitive' people of the *!Kung* tribe in the Kalahari desert in Africa.

In medieval Spain, St. Theresa of Avila described her experience, which yogis call the awakening of nada, the manifestation of transcendental consciousness as sound: "The noises in my head are so loud that I am beginning to wonder what is going on in it . . . My head sounds just as if it were full of brimming rivers . . . and a host of little birds seem to be whistling, not in the ears, but in the upper part of the head, where the higher part of the soul is said to be; I have held this view for a long time, for the spirit seems to move upward with great velocity."[8]

Conclusion

The above are classical kundalini type experiences, but they have occurred in different geographical locations and at different times in history, because kundalini is not dependent on time and space. However, few cultures have documented the kundalini experience so well or consistently as the sages in India. The Indian culture seems to have been ripe to allow the yogic sciences to be preserved, cultivated and revered. As a result, a sublime philosophy has emerged and has been recorded in many books, a few of which have come down to us through the ravages of time and history. Books such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, the yogic texts such as *Yoga*

Vashishta and *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, and the sublime beauty of the books of the Upanishads and Vedanta, which have inspired many of the great men and women of history from all over the world, are testaments to the existence of this great culture. Sophisticated maps of consciousness, charts to allow us to enter the sublime bliss of altered states of consciousness and meditative experience, myriad techniques and processes, and untold works and books for guidance have emerged and have been handed down over thousands of years. Nowhere else has the kundalini experience been so well, richly or scientifically recorded in all its sublimity and variation.

Swami Vivekananda sums up the whole question of kundalini as a universal phenomena when he states: "When by the power of long internal meditation, the vast mass of energy stored up travels along the sushumna and strikes the chakras, the reaction is immensely more intense than any reaction of sense perception. Wherever there was any manifestation of what is ordinarily called supernatural power or wisdom, a little current of kundalini must have found its way into the sushumna."

We see then that an experience exists which is one but which has had a vast impact on society and culture wherever it has occurred. The experience is one but the names are many. Yogis call this the awakening of shakti or kundalini and have developed a vast, intricate, systematic and progressive science by which they can awaken this power which lies dormant in each of us and one which can evolve ourselves and society to new and undreamed of heights of experience and achievement.

Analysis of the Chakras from a Psychophysiological Viewpoint

PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGY

Swami Shankardevananda: What are the psychodynamics of the chakras?

Swami Vivekananda: From a physiological viewpoint there are aspects of the chakras that deal with mood, with the mind, aspects dealing with experiences on the psychic plane and also aspects concerned with the energy turnover of the body and mind.

The brain, which is divided up in terms of its emotions and cognition, can also be divided into the aspects of the different chakras. It seems to me that from the physiological and anatomical point of view, the chakras are the sum total of the input and output of the different segments of the body. The throat (vishuddhi) section deals with perception, especially the voice. Many of the psychic aspects of this chakra are actually telepathic communication. The chest (anahata) deals mainly with the love aspect. The upper abdomen (manipura) deals with the assertiveness and drive aspect. The lower abdominal or upper pelvic area (swadhisthana) deals with the pleasure aspect. The lowest segment (mooladhara), according to Freud and many yogis before him, deals with security, possessions and material objects.

Consider manipura chakra. It deals with hunger and it is directly connected with hunger centres in the hypothalamus. It is closely related to the next chakra down, swadhisthana, which deals with pleasure. The hunger and pleasure centres are adjacent in the posterior part of the hypothalamus. They are so close to each other that some of the cells actually intertwine and it is hard to separate which is which. It is interesting to note that when people are sexually tense and sexually dissatisfied, they start reaching for sweet things – they get hungry, start putting on weight and all that. This indicates the close interconnection of these two chakras.

There are also what we can call energy circuits involved in these interconnections. These energies can be directed up or down. If the instincts or desires related to specific areas are not actually satisfied, then there is a tendency for the energy to build up. We see it especially in relation to the sexual impulse, which is connected mainly to swadhisthana, and also partly to mooladhara and manipura. An unfulfilled sexual life at swadhisthana level tends to redirect energy either into the desire for power and dominance at manipura or the neurotic craving for possessions at mooladhara.

Energy is built into this chakra system and all of its connections with the hypothalamus and the limbic system. The limbic system, amongst other things, generates a continuity of emotions, and emotions of course motivate action. If there is, for example, competition, then anger is stirred up within the solar plexus, stomach areas and related organs, including the adrenal glands. The adrenals, of course, activate a person to fight if it is over territory or food. Also, adrenaline increases the sugar content in the blood by breaking down glycogen in the liver, so it keeps the animal going even though it is hungry and short of food. If necessary, adrenaline will supply the bloodstream with sugar, so it can win the fight and get food.

It seems to me that a lot of the physiological energy that is inherent in all these chakra circuits is this sort of energy. I do not really believe it is energy per se, but I think it is nerve impulses, for instance in the case of manipura chakra, stimulated by a block in blood glucose which then activates the stomach and the hunger

centres in the hypothalamus, which then activates these mechanisms.

Swami Shankardevananda: So you do not believe in a specific localized energy, but a total body functioning within that circuit. And one circuit becomes dominant if it is neglected or overactivated.

Swami Vivekananda: Yes. It can be constitutionally dominant in a person too. You see people who are all manipura chakra, a lot of drive, ambitions and right in there. They are not sexual people (swadhisthana motivated) and they might not even have a security drive (mooladhara motivated). I have known many business people and lawyers who dabble here and there and do it only for the fun of the game. They are just very competitive people. Everyone says to the wives, "Well, it must be great to be married to a guy like that," and they say, "Ugh, he has little swadhisthana (sex) or anahata chakra (love) working. He is a bad husband, but makes a very good provider (manipura)."

Swami Shankardevananda: In a study of sociopaths and those people who are fearless, it was found that there is in fact very little difference between them. People who are testing jet planes and rocketships and climbing mountains without ropes etc. have fundamentally the same character as sociopaths.

Swami Vivekananda: If a person's behaviour is accepted by society, then he is a hero. If it is unacceptable he is a psychopath. It reminds me of the old joke that you can murder someone if the government approves of it. This is interesting because these people have that same kind of drive. They are driven by an overactive manipura chakra.

Mooladhara chakra deals principally in security, swadhisthana principally with pleasure, manipura principally with assertiveness, courage and personal power, anahata with love, vishuddhi with communication out and also the ability, mainly because of the perception of our external environment, to feel at home virtually anywhere. It is a state of consciousness that is inherent in vishuddhi chakra. When it develops to a certain point you can be sitting on a pile of garbage and still everything is just right. Ajna chakra, of course, deals with intellect, intuition and the psychic power (siddhis) such as telepathy.

As well as these qualities within the different chakras there is another parameter, which is the degree of evolution. Each one of us has these circuits constitutionally energized to different degrees. One person may have a lot of energization of swadhisthana chakra; that person is very much pleasure bent, and has perhaps less development at manipura or anahata.

Swami Shankardevananda: That would be very much a hormonal thing depending mainly on the drive from the hypothalamus.

Swami Vivekananda: That is right. I have not thought very much about what governs the constitutional factors of it. Each one of us is proportionately energized differently in different chakra circuits. Each one of us strikes a different chord. There is a different frequency of energization of the chakras. There are individual differences between each one of us, because each one of us has different degrees of evolution of the quality of the manifestation of each of the chakras. A sociopath who goes round beating up old ladies to steal their handbags, and an astronaut, may have the same chord. They may be identical in the level of activity of each of the chakras, but the guy who is an astronaut, hopefully, has a higher degree of evolution in most of his chakras. So these are two important parameters which define the qualities of the chakras – percentage of activity and degree of evolution. These define the character of each person.

Swami Shankardevananda: You mentioned that there are chakras which express energy and certain chakras which take in energy.

Swami Vivekananda: No, what I was saying is that we know these circuits exist in anatomical form, that there are whole areas down there in the body which do not only trigger off something up here (in the brain), but are also triggered by something up here. And we know that there are, for instance, the hunger and the sensual centres in the hypothalamus. We know that they are directly connected with the relevant organs in the body. As the hunger builds up, more neuronal activity builds up within those circuits. And if an emotional component comes into it, it's very likely that other parts of the limbic system will start generating energy too. You will go rushing around to get something to eat as quickly as possible. This implies that there is an increased neuronal activity within that circuit.

People talk about energy within those circuits, and they are certain it is an energy. They say these circuits are energized because when they start getting activated, you can feel throbbing, shaking, etc. But is it energy like electricity running through a wire, or is it in actual fact only a message like the electricity running through a telephone wire? The mere fact that a person shakes can mean that it is a message that is being transmitted to the muscles and the muscles do all the shaking.

I tend to prefer the physiological point of view which says that it is neuronal activity; that is, the nerves and circuits conduct impulses and the muscles create the shaking and energy.

Swami Shankardevananda: But there is energy even in neuronal activity.

Swami Vivekananda: Well, there is, but the energy is produced secondarily to the neuronal activity. The primary object of the circuit is to convey an impulse. The message is carried and it uses energy as a carrier in the same way as a telephone uses energy. You would not get a telephone wire and try to light a 100 watt bulb, because there is just not enough energy there. Telephone wires run only on about 2 volts; it is not primarily an energy transmission, but primarily a message transmission; the energy is a secondary issue and comes from another source.

Some people, by their nature, have some of these circuits much more activated and 'energized' than others. There are some people who are very much more into the whole manipura thing. They eat a lot and have big muscles; they are all manipura chakra. You get anahata people who are very paternal and loving and always sensing other people's feelings, everywhere they go. The same applies to the other chakras.

Chakra types can be easily seen at a party where there are a whole lot of people around and you do not know anybody. Then you will see the person who's very much into feelings will start picking up all over the place who is kind and who is not kind. That is what he perceives in the environment. He is predominantly an anahata type. A person who's into the intellectual trip will listen to all the conversations going on and if there is good intellectual tone, he will fit into that circle. If a group is talking about football or something like that, he will go straight past. He will be the vishuddhi/ ajna type. Then you will get the manipura chap who will notice first of all who's in the power scene and he will start associating with that. If there is no obvious power position, it usually develops towards the end of the night. Sometimes you will go into a place and say "That is it." It is a special chair and a special place. Now if you are on a power trip you go and sit there.

The emotional person, when he perceives the scene, is perceiving the feelings all around the place, the swadhisthana chap will be seeing other things such as food, sexual encounters and so on. Each one of us has a preference in these things, and that preference seems to me to be driven by energization or activation of those particular circuits which may be predominating. And some people are balanced and versatile and will fit into any situation. These people are the yogic types.

I think there is an inbuilt rhythm and activation of these particular circuits within the body. I somehow suspect that we go along on a number of different levels of consciousness at the same time. Sometimes we have dreams of total experiences of something that is going to occur in three or four months' time. That means time, instead of being a longitudinal thing, is a vertical thing. How do we explain that in our neurophysiological framework? There are a lot of experiences that are difficult to explain scientifically. I don't think that necessarily means that a physiological explanation is invalid.

These days it is possible to measure certain physical manifestations of chakras and the dissociated chakras. Maybe you could get a personality break of a person who was obviously into a certain chakra and test the activation of that chakra. I think the energy around the chakra is easily explainable in that it is the energy that would be given off by the activated field.

Swami Shankardevananda: In terms of circuits, some of the chakras have more receptive properties, especially in mooladhara and ajna, whilst certain chakras seem to be more expressive, such as swadhisthana and manipura.

Swami Vivekananda: Probably it is associated with the jnanendriyas and karmendriyas (sensory and motor nerves).

Swami Shankardevananda: All the chakras must have a dual purpose: there must be a receptive and active side to them. For example, ajna is receptive to psychic and intuitive energy, but it also transmits at the subtle, telepathic level. Vishuddhi, which expresses and communicates that intuition at the verbal level, simultaneously expresses compassion felt through anahata, and also expresses the experiences felt through manipura and swadhisthana. All chakras have a twoway channel and that is because of ida and pingala.

Swami Vivekananda: I think that vishuddhi expresses the qualities of the other chakras only as an agent of their quality, because the other chakras will express energy in a different way. If you are with a person who is loving, especially if you get close, you can feel the love pouring out. Therefore, anahata is expressing in that way, but I think that anahata would use vishuddhi chakra to say the words that go with it.

Swami Shankardevananda: Yes, the energy flows through the other chakras, so the activation of one chakra affects them all and modifies them according to its major harmonic, but in its own way. Manipura and swadhisthana chakras would then become love dominant if anahata becomes active. All the other chakras would then line themselves up with anahata.

Swami Vivekananda: Manipura chakra is an expressive chakra and if you feel high in manipura, then it would tend to flow out love more than feel the experience of love, which is anahata.

Swami Shankardevananda: There is a definite connection between mooladhara and ajna. Also, there appears to be a connection between swadhisthana, vishuddhi and bindu, a very direct connection, and lalana, which is a sub-chakra of vishuddhi. Then it seems that manipura and anahata are also related. This intimate

connection between the chakras is symbolized by the seven candles on the Hebrew candlestand (menorah). This is a representation of how chakras are interacting, but actually it is a much more complicated diagram in which all chakras interact with each other. We can regard mooladhara and swadhisthana as being tamasic chakras, manipura and anahata as being predominantly rajasic, and vishuddhi and ajna as being sattwic. These pairs function together. Vishuddhi and ajna, for example, are connected on a receptive, expressive merger, one being active and the other being receptive.

Swami Vivekananda: But I see rajasic and tamasic qualities being in each of the chakras and I see the chakras as being horizontal rather than a vertical ladder form. They all have qualities from rajasic, right through to sattwic.

Swami Shankardevananda: That is also true. Some people think the word tamasic carries moralistic connotations.

Swami Vivekananda: In the context of evolution, is the bliss that the yogi experiences any different to the bliss of orgasm? It might be at a more highly evolved level. Is the selfish love of a mother for her child, to the exclusion of all other children, anything more than just a lower level of transcendental love?

Swami Shankardevananda: In his article on kundalini, Carl Jung says that from above manipura chakra you leave the whole sphere of the earth behind, the individuality – and the diaphragm which lies at the manipura level could be an important anatomical separating component as far as the chakras are concerned. The movement away from individual love towards universal love takes place at that point just above the diaphragm – anahata chakra.

Swami Vivekananda: It is very likely that these different opinions are all right. The mountain looks different from different angles, but from above you see all the people looking at the same mountain. The problem comes when you go back down to earth and talk to all the individual people. It is very difficult to describe what you experienced when you saw the whole mountain. This is why we get so many different opinions, philosophies and religions.

MOOLADHARA AND SWADHISTHANA CHAKRAS

Swami Shankardevananda: Can you discuss the nerve complexes associated with mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras?

Swami Vivekananda: Well, for all of these segments there are somatic nerves, which deal with the sensory input and the voluntary motor output, and also there are the autonomic nerves, divided into sympathetic and parasympathetic. And usually there is an appropriate endocrine gland for each segment, like the pineal, pituitary and thyroid. The exception is mooladhara, and to date, medical science has not found an endocrine gland associated with it. This of course does not mean that one will not be discovered in the future.
Let us try to work out the psychophysiological aspects of mooladhara. In the male it is actually associated with the base of the penis and with the female, the cervix. So it has a very deep-rooted sexual link.
If you repeat a mooladhara chakra mantra and you concentrate in that area somewhere, you will feel a certain vibration occurring. Now what is the mantra doing? Is it stimulating some physiological organ, or is it some sort of occult stimulation? Is it stimulating a physical organ or is it activating a lot of energy which seems to appear in a certain place which we call a chakra? I think it is perhaps the last one of these.

Swami Shankardevananda: I believe that the mooladhara trigger point and the place of actual experience may be different, but the general location of mooladhara chakra is certainly in the perineum; it is clearly felt in that area. If it is felt higher, then it is not mooladhara chakra, it is swadhisthana. Either the mantra is wrong or the vibration is stimulating something else which is more receptive and reactive.

Swami Vivekananda: Is there a physiological basis for this? It is quite possible that the repetition of a mantra is stimulating the spinal cord. You can certainly feel it in the area being stimulated and it is not only there, because all the fibres that are coming out from the body are stimulated. Therefore, no matter at what level you stimulate your spinal cord, no matter what chakra is stimulated, you are going to collect the fibres from so called mooladhara chakra. At swadhisthana chakra you will also get the mooladhara chakra fibres; at manipura you get the mooladhara fibres back to swadhisthana and manipura as well – and all the way up. Mooladhara chakra is always there in the act because its fibres come from the lowest part.

Swami Shankardevananda: Could we consider the sexual energy of mooladhara and its possible transmutations?

Swami Vivekananda: This basic sexual energy that Gopi Krishna has written about is actually the sattwic or subtle essence which can be perceived when the consciousness becomes very sensitive. This is the essence of the kundalini experience, the sublimation of sexual energy, the basic life force which is the source of all

generation, regeneration and reproduction. Gopi Krishna felt what he was seeing was semen being converted into energy and distributing itself throughout the body. I feel that what he was perceiving was a clairvoyant view of energy given off by the simple nerve fibres in those organs he was talking about. However, he identified it as semen because that is what is written in the scriptures. I do not know what women are supposed to have, he did not mention that and I do not think the scriptures do either.

Swami Nischalananda: The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and certain tantric texts do talk about women; however, generally that side has been neglected. According to yoga the sexual energy in men and women is sublimated and transmuted into the ascent of the kundalini. The starting point is mooladhara. For some reason, the Buddhists say that the ascent commences at manipura, not mooladhara. How is it that the enlightened Buddha completely bypassed the two lower chakras? Actually the whole concept of where kundalini lies is a matter of experience. I don't think that Buddha actually said that kundalini starts in manipura; more likely he stated that real spiritual evolution starts from manipura. Swami Satyananda has said many times that only when the kundalini reaches manipura is it stabilized. It starts in mooladhara but stabilizes in manipura.

I think this apparent discrepancy comes because of the philosophy of Buddha who was a jnani, and he didn't get much into kundalini yoga. Vajrayana, on the other hand, which was an offshoot of Buddhism at a later date, is very much concerned with mooladhara. But let us get back to the functioning of mooladhara.

Swami Shankardevananda: Mooladhara chakra has two basic modes of function, one is energy depleted and the other is energy activated. Within that system there is a sick and a healthy mooladhara. What are the symptoms of these different states of mooladhara chakra? It is simple – you are either sick or healthy, balanced or unbalanced. If you are unbalanced you are going to have ida over or under active or pingala over or under active. You are going to have physical and mental symptoms, fear, insecurity and all those things. Freud said that everyone who denies mooladhara becomes constipated and hoards money. Every miser is constipated. These symptoms may be mild or very extreme. In the fully awakened state they are either going to rip you to pieces or take you to a higher awareness. So what is the basic quality of a well functioning mooladhara chakra?

Swami Vivekananda: Renunciation.

Swami Shankardevananda: We can say that security and renunciation are interchangeable in the mooladhara system. We can say that in this chakra basic security is the key. Renunciation obviously implies security and if you are secure within yourself, you don't need any external security.

Swami Satyadharma: When awakening of mooladhara takes place then there is no such problem as insecurity.

Swami Vivekananda: Of course, this is the state of consciousness of an awakened mooladhara. A low energized mooladhara chakra generally means low vitality, emotional insecurity, fear of the future. I also think low self-esteem is involved in this. It almost forms the syndrome of depression, although you don't necessarily have to get the joylessness of the low energized swadhisthana chakra. If there is low evolution and high drive in mooladhara, then you get the ambitious person out to collect as much as he can. He can be a multimillionaire and still accumulate all sorts of things because he still feels insecure. The security is a state of consciousness, not a physical reality. As mooladhara chakra starts to evolve the person attains security, which is totally unrelated to circumstances.

You can see varying degrees of renunciation not only between sannyasins and the community, but within the community of sannyasins as well.

Swami Satyadharma: When energies pool at mooladhara chakra, do they stimulate or aggravate the chakras? What is the difference between stagnation of energy and activation of the chakra?

Swami Vivekananda: Well, I just see that the mooladhara circuit in some people is sometimes poorly energized; the whole circuit itself has low energization. This varies between people and varies within people, depending upon cosmic events, the position of planets, the weather and all sorts of things, including psychological factors such as disappointments, hurts and threats to one's security. It varies with each of us. Some people are very much in mooladhara; hooked on the basic sexual aspect of mooladhara in which case they are very much involved in money and possessions. If they are low energized, they will still think about these things, but they will not do anything about it.

I think you need a certain amount of energization to produce the drive that is inherent in each chakra; the basic sexual hunting drive in swadhisthana chakra, the territorial and dominance drive in manipura and the nurturing drive in anahata chakra. Remember, there are two parameters, the amount of energization of each chakra and the degree of evolution.

It seems that yoga practices balance the energy inherent within each of the chakra circuits, and by virtue of eliminating the blockages (samskaras), evolve the quality of the chakras at the same time. And of course, if you

have the grace of the guru you are on the express line.

Swami Satyadharma: So does pooled energy act to block or can it be used to activate the chakra? For example, if a person has a lot of pooled energy in mooladhara, would that be an energy block or could that pooled energy be utilized to activate and awaken a chakra?

Swami Vivekananda: It can be used to activate it if the psychological blockages are eliminated.

Swami Shankardevananda: I think there is a difference between storage and blockage. The ability to hold or store energy takes place consciously, whilst having an unconscious or subconscious blockage leads to repression.

Swami Vivekananda: And repression of a highly energized chakra can produce all sorts of physical symptoms, such as muscle tension, malfunctioning of internal organs, etc., as well as emotional problems.

Swami Shankardevananda: What are the psychological effects of mooladhara awakening?

Swami Vivekananda: As I have already said, renunciation.

Swami Shankardevananda: The feeling of separation, the beginning of your individual awareness, awakening to the fact that you are separate from something else.

Swami Nischalananda: Primal alienation or something like that.

Swami Shankardevananda: Do you think that the basic energy at mooladhara is anxiety, fear, or is it insecurity?

Swami Vivekananda: The basic emotion? Well, it depends on the energization of the circuit. If there is not much energy, it will tend to be depression and hopelessness. But if there is a lot of energy, it will then depend upon the evolution of the chakra. If it is little evolved, then there will be intense insecurity, which is anxiety. If it is highly evolved there will be a sense of oneness and complete security. Generally mooladhara is blocked to some extent in most people and blockages may manifest as muscle tension.
Muscle tensions are manifestations of the circuits of mental blockages, samskaras. It is the samskaras that keep down the evolution of the quality of consciousness that is within these chakra circuits. I think that low evolution, muscle spasms and the maladjustments of the organisms that are supplied by that part of the autonomic nervous system are due to psychic tensions.

Swami Shankardevananda: These psychic and personality tensions are due to various events in the environment.

Swami Vivekananda: That is right. The inner unconscious conflicts coming into conflict with certain events in the environment. For example, if a person feels very insecure and someone steals a valuable possession from him, he may go into an absolute frenzy. This is opposed to the reaction of someone else who does not have the same sort of conflicts and insecurities.
If a person cannot express the feeling that is involved at mooladhara, that feeling can express itself in somatic problems like spasms of the muscles, in autonomic problems, blood pressure, constipation, and who knows what else, maybe functional urethritis, cystitis, colitis, rectitis, dysmenorrhea and so on.

PSYCHOSIS

Swami Shankardevananda: Would you associate a highly energized, low evolved mooladhara problem as the cause of manic depression?

Swami Vivekananda: I think manic depression is an ida/ pingala thing. We are in another dimension there, because a manic person will undergo all the manifestations of a very highly energized and controlled chakra. He will be rushing around gambling all his money away, trying to get more, getting into all sorts of sexual exploits, going round pushing other people around, the rajasic aspect.

Swami Sambuddhananda: Would you say that schizophrenia and paranoia are related with ida and pingala imbalance?

Swami Vivekananda: Yes, there are people who are stuck in ida. Ida is very much overactive. It is interesting that research shows that the taking in of negative aspects of the environment through the right hemisphere (ida) is paranoia. This is what paranoia is all about. A lot of people, some of them quite highly evolved people, who have specialized much in ida are a bit paranoid. Ida seems to have a negative aspect about it. Even if you come into it at a high level of consciousness, it seems to have a bit of a negative pull. If you are going to activate your chakras, you have to make sure your ida and pingala are balanced.

Swami Shankardevananda: But manic depression, psychosis and other mental problems relate to either mooladhara or ajna because it is only at these two points that you have the fusion of ida and pingala. Therefore,

psychosis, manic depression and all these things would seem to relate very much to the mooladhara/ajna circuit. If ida and pingala are coming out of mooladhara chakra, then what would be the mechanism dealing with psychosis?

Swami Vivekananda: I think that ida and pingala are only related to the activities of the cerebral hemispheres.

Swami Shankardevananda: But the whole body is controlled by the hemispheres. The whole body gets the energy. Arteries and veins, sensory and motor nerves, right and left hemispheres are all reflections of the ida and pingala process.

Swami Vivekananda: I see ida and pingala anatomically up here in the brain, not crossing down the spine. I believe that ida and pingala crossing each other is a concept and a symbol of experience.

Swami Satyadharma: I think that awakening of mooladhara is the beginning of psychic awareness. That is why with mooladhara awakening, people often become disturbed.

Swami Vivekananda: Yes. They can get caught in the psychic consciousness, which is the consciousness in which you have hallucinations, etc.

Swami Shankardevananda: It is much more powerful than anything they have ever experienced before.

Swami Vivekananda: We slide in and out of it twice a day anyway, even if we are not doing any formal closed eye meditation techniques. I think if you hold the awareness at the psychic level, and you can do it with yoga nidra, you will experience a state in which there is thought blocking – what is called thought disorder – where one thought leads on to another one that is unrelated to it and it just goes off into the distance. Paradoxical thinking – where two paradoxical things can exist together, hallucinations, voices talking to you, you see things and so forth.

Swami Shankardevananda: So, therefore we assume that pingala is blocked and ida is flowing. All that stuff is coming out through ida from mooladhara; basic subconscious material.

Swami Vivekananda: At the same time there is psychic withdrawal.

Swami Shankardevananda: Yes, so what does that imply?

Swami Vivekananda: If there is a psychic withdrawal, then even though we appear to be in communication with the outside, in actual fact we are still inside from the psychic point of view. Paradoxical thinking, suspicious feelings, voices and all these things, and not being able to keep your thoughts together on one topic for any more than a couple of seconds; all these come from a psychic, inner plane.

PHYSICAL DISEASES

Swami Shankardevananda: What about physical disease associated with mooladhara chakra problems? We have already talked about constipation; this of course brings about things like haemorrhoids.

Swami Vivekananda: There are many types of constipation involved too – of energy, emotions, information – all inherent in mooladhara chakra as hoarding of any type.

Swami Gaurishankar: What about disease?

Swami Vivekananda: Statistics involved in diseases in this area tend to relate to the manipura and anahata areas, and the diseases of hypertension, heart problems, peptic ulcers etc. I assume many diseases of the lower excretory and reproductive organs are associated with a malfunctioning mooladhara.

Swami Shankardevananda: Cancer?

Swami Vivekananda: Yes, of the rectum and bladder.

Swami Shankardevananda: The helplessness associated with it too?

Swami Vivekananda: I don't know if it is all cancers we are talking about now. I don't know if they would be segmental or not. Hypertension, for instance, appears to be a generalized condition. It is mainly related to the manipura chakra circuits. Cancer may well be a generalized condition that is related to one of the chakras, perhaps mooladhara.

Swami Paramananda: How far can you take the relationship between the chakras and the physical organs like the heart? If the heart is not functioning well and it affects the anahata chakra which is love, can that also mean that there is a lack of love going through that person and physically it comes out in anahata chakra and the heart as disease?

Swami Vivekananda: Yes, it can be in both. If a person has a need to receive love and it is not coming, and/or that person has imbalanced constructions of love, then anahata problems can arise in the form of cardiac

problems such as angina, palpitations, etc.

Swami Paramananda: Do you think that applies to all the chakras? If you find a particular organ not functioning in a sick person, does it mean there is a deficiency of the qualities of the chakra related to that part of the body?

Swami Vivekananda: As a general rule, yes, but you can get other problems as well. For instance, you can get an activation of manipura chakra, which activates the sympathetic nervous system which produces restriction of the coronary artery.
There is interaction between the different chakras, and this is the beauty of a well-taught yoga class – it balances all these qualities, and balance is the key to the whole thing. Rather than trying to work on one area, which is a more specific medical style, yoga therapy works on the whole human structure.

Swami Muktibodhananda: How do the physical organs relate to the chakras and spiritual evolution?

Swami Vivekananda: Consider hysterectomy. Let us assume the wrong woman is wheeled into the operating theatre and she has a hysterectomy. This will then cut off the end organ for a lot of nerve fibres and the atrophy will run up the nerves and eliminate the brain centres involved in that. This is an example of a deficiency in the organ producing changes in the centres involved, the circuit. Does that make it any more difficult for her to realize higher aspects of swadhisthana chakra?

Swami Shankardevananda: It depends how much of the centre is lost. If she just loses the uterus and not the ovaries, for example, all the hormonal secretions will be maintained. As women reach menopause they will undergo a natural hysterectomy.

Swami Vivekananda: Yes, but they don't lose the nerve endings. When the uterus is removed, because the nerve endings are useless, they atrophy. Does this affect the associated chakras?

Swami Nischalananda: Swami Satyananda says it does not make any difference if there is a vasectomy, because it is only the physical body. I think, as regards swadhisthana for example, that if they are already on the spiritual path and have developed some psychic awareness, then that operation would definitely not affect them much, if at all. If they had no background of yogic practise, then probably the destruction of that organ would slightly hamper progress, because initially you depend upon those organs to stimulate something, especially in the practices of hatha and kriya yoga. If you follow the path of bhakti or jnana yoga, of course, it makes no difference.

Swami Shankardevananda: If you lose one centre or two centres, physically I think it does not hinder you because a lot of other centres are left. There are tons of potential left within the brain.

Swami Vivekananda: To sum up, we function on physical, emotional, mental, psychic and spiritual levels. The chakras span all these levels. The purpose of yoga and tantra is to stimulate the chakras at all these levels. Then, and only then, can we become healthy human beings.

MENTAL PROBLEMS

Swami Sambuddhananda: What is the cause of depression?

Swami Vivekananda: I think low activation of the swadhisthana circuit is the prime cause of depression.

Swami Shankardevananda: I thought it was due to low activation in mooladhara.

Swami Vivekananda: Well, the qualities in both these chakras are very close.

Swami Shankardevananda: So what is the difference between mooladhara and swadhisthana?

Swami Vivekananda: You can see the different qualities in the various types of anxiety you see in different people. In psychiatry, the various forms of anxiety all come under the name of anxiety, yet they are all different syndromes, and they are also related to different chakra circuits. People with a low energized mooladhara chakra are not just apprehensive about the future, they also feel insecure about the present. They simply don't feel that this is a secure world, and the state of consciousness they have at any time is that things are dangerous.
There is another type of depression which I perceived in a woman who was forty-five years of age. Her husband had left her when she was about thirty-five, and she led a very quiet life. But she was still pretty energized in swadhisthana chakra. She was describing the anxiety that she had. Through empathy I started to experience what she was describing. It was a sort of quivering vibration going on in the pelvis. It was a quivering all around the area of swadhisthana chakra, not specifically genital, but all around the upper part of the pelvis. It really was a type of anxiety.
I gave her the general swadhisthana practices such as shalabhasana, etc. She improved a lot. The yogic practices seemed to deactivate her pent-up emotion. I think it was just sexual tension that she had in that area and

she was perceiving it as anxiety. She also had a fear of it because she did not know what it was.
There is another case of depression which is a wellknown one – butterflies in the stomach, accompanied by palpitations, which is just activation of the sympathetic nervous system. One case I saw was a taxi driver who had a minor accident in his cab. He got this phobia and he couldn't get in his taxi without experiencing butterflies. In Aruba (South America), where he lived, taxi fares are minimal so that the taxi drivers are really hard up. This man had to employ someone else to drive his cab for him and he was losing money. He had been off work for six weeks. Every time he went up to his cab he would get this terrible churning in the stomach and he developed hypertension. He was a very dynamic Aries.
So I thought, "What to do?" I taught him kunjal in order to get all that energy out of manipura chakra. He did it once in the ashram and then immediately went out and got in his cab. This type of anxiety and depression is obviously manipura overactivity.
There is another type of anxiety which arises through too much thinking: "Wouldn't it be terrible if such and such happened, and if that happens maybe something else will happen, and if that happens maybe . . .?" People with this problem just think and think and think, until that preoccupation produces a fear within them which is not necessarily contained in the symptoms. That is dealt with by practising bhramari pranayama. So within the diagnosis of anxiety there seems to be these four types. There may be others related to the other chakras, but I have not yet noticed them.

Swami Nischalananda: Maybe stuttering, loss of voice and things like that, related to vishuddhi, can be cured by simhasana.

Swami Vivekananda: Exactly, tightening up of the throat. It seems to be more related to a lack of self-confidence rather than the feeling of anxiety. Simhasana works wonders.
When I was in general practice, I used to do a lot of spinal adjustments and manipulation, and after a while I specialized in spinal problems. I did a lot of backs at that stage. I found that patients came in clusters. I would get a lot of people with an upper cervical lesion, migraine headaches, tightness in the neck region, with all the symptoms of chronic sinusitis and all the other things related to upper cervical tension.
I found that all the people with upper cervical problems were coming in when the moon was full, all the people with lumbar/sacral problems were coming in when the moon was new, and in between all the others were spread out. This is interesting because it is related to chakra activation. Almost before the patient told me, I could pinpoint the exact spinal segment in which he would be having problems. I knew according to the moon phase. This relationship became obvious, especially towards the end of the time I was manipulating, because I took on the symptoms of my patients.

Swami Shankardevananda: This means that we need a whole set of asanas working on all the segments of the spine.

Swami Vivekananda: Yes, we have them, for example, surya namaskara. In Australia we used to use the leg lock posture for mooladhara chakra; shalabhasana and bhujangasana for swadhisthana chakra. These asanas are actually supposed to be for manipura chakra, but so many people have such stiff backs that they activate swadhisthana chakra instead. Then paschimottanasana and dhanurasana for manipura; for anahata, supta vajrasana and matsyasana; for vishuddhi, sarvangasana; and for ajna chakra, sirshasana and ashwa sanchalanasana. Halasana also activates vishuddhi because the inflection is brought right up to the upper cervical area. However, people who have a stiff upper cervical spine should not do any of those upper spine flexion practices, because the discs are very tiny at that part and these asanas can be too much.

Swami Nischalananda: Khandharasana is good for this area. It's not so strong because a lot of the body weight is taken by the feet.

Swami Gaurishankar: Let us get back to the subject of depression.

Swami Vivekananda: I think there are different qualities in the thing that we call depression. The dread of the future is one of the symptoms of depression and I think it is a mooladhara chakra problem. But the dejection, lack of joy and loss of sense of humour that you find in many people is due to a low energized swadhisthana. With a low energized manipura comes loss of appetite and low emotional activity. In depression there is a vicious circle; the whole mechanism, the whole noradrenalin/dopamine mechanism seems to slow down. It involves hormones. Most of the antidepressants act upon this noradrenalin/dopamine system.

Swami Shankardevananda: I would also imagine that depletion of testosterone, excessive sexual activity, depletion of adrenaline, excessive fear and anxiety, etc., all lead to a depressed state.

Swami Vivekananda: That is right. I have often suspected too, that when the moon is new for instance, then people tend to function to some extent on the energy of the lower chakras. The other ones are functioning too, but it is the lower chakras that are carrying a lot of the energy. Actually, the normal person experiences a depressed feeling lasting a couple of days during that phase. Then the moon starts activating the other chakras

and the person comes out of it.

Swami Nischalananda: This relationship is also indicated by the fact that some people go crazy at the time of full moon. It means that energy comes up to and accumulates at ajna chakra. The high energy affects the mind.

Swami Vivekananda: It is strange that the medical profession denies that the full moon has any effect on the mental state of people, and there are comprehensive statistics from psychiatric hospitals to show that the admission rate is no higher at the time of the full moon than it is at the time of new moon. To this I say that there are different conditions for which people are being admitted at the time of the full moon and at the time of the new moon; this can be seen most clearly.

Swami Shankardevananda: In hospitals, all the nursing staff knows that when the full moon comes there are going to be problems. There will be more road accidents, more crazy people coming in and people going off their heads, etc.

Swami Muktibodhananda: What is the difference between fear, anxiety and phobia?

Swami Vivekananda: Fear is a normal response to a threatening situation. If a tiger came into this room, nine people would be frightened and that would be a natural response. Anxiety, on the other hand, is really a collection of symptoms which go on for a long time, usually not provoked by an external situation. Phobias are immediate responses, just like fear, except that the responses are to a non-threatening situation. A mouse a hundred yards down the corridor, for instance, would not affect any of us, but someone with a phobia about mice would panic.

Swami Shankardevananda: Phobias are actually a displacement from an original object on to a different situation.

Swami Vivekananda: That is the ego-defence mechanism that Freud used to talk about. Freud used to talk about anxiety, psychic complexes and so on, but the man in the taxi who had butterflies in the stomach did have an accident which may have activated some old samskara somewhere, which turned into a full fear of getting into his taxi. But the whole thing was cleared so quickly; it was not deepseated. Sometimes I believe these things just build up in a susceptible moment rather than in a susceptible person. They build up from a small bit of anxiety to a bigger anxiety on the basis of a vicious circle. You break that vicious circle anywhere and the whole thing just dissolves.

Swami Shankardevananda: The longer it is sustained the more difficult it is to break.

Swami Vivekananda: Each chakra has its own work to perform and if one centre is blocked or diseased, then another centre takes over its work. Because this work or function is being done by another centre, it becomes perverted. This happens a lot if a person is inhibited in swadhisthana chakra. Manipura will take over the work and then the sexual activities will be just a power play, competition and that sort of stuff – completely perverted.
This perversion also occurs if manipura chakra takes over the job of anahata. It is seen in do-gooders, those people who come and force you, almost by threats of violence, to let them help you.

Swami Shankardevananda: Another example is of those persons who get involved in a sexual encounter to fulfil the anahata centre, and of course they don't get that fulfilment.
This can lead to problems in marriage and all the things you were saying about perversion of normal function.

Swami Vivekananda: So the purpose of yoga is to balance the functioning of the chakras and at the same time to awaken the associated energies. Only then can we function as joyful, spontaneous human beings, without depression, psychosis or physical problems. Only when we balance and awaken all the chakras can life become meaningful.

Appendix

Table 1

Chakra	Nature	No. of Petals	Colour	Physical Location	Kshetram	Physiological Relationship	Endocrine Relationship	Dhatu
Mooladhara	Root Lotus	Four	Deep Red	Perineum Cervix	Perineum Cervix	Sacro-Coccygeal Plexus	Perineal Body	Bone
Swadhisthana	One's Own Abode	Six	Orange-Red	Coccyx	Pubic Bone	Pelvic Plexus	Testes, Ovaries	Fat
Manipura	City of Jewels	Ten	Yellow	Behind Navel	Navel	Solar Plexus	Adrenal Glands	Flesh
Anahata	Source of Unbroken Sound	Twelve	Blue	Behind Heart	Centre of Chest	Cardiac Plexus	Thymus Gland	Blood
Vishuddhi	Centre of Nectar	Sixteen	Purple	Behind Throat	Pit of Throat	Pharyngeal & Laryngeal Plexus	Thyroid Gland	Skin
Ajna	Centre of Command	Two	Clear or Grey	Centre of Head	Eyebrow Centre	Cavernous Plexus	Pineal Gland	Marrow
Sahasrara	Thousand Petalled Lotus	Thousand (Infinite)	Red or Multicoloured	Crown of Head	Crown of Head	Hypothalamic Pituitary Axis	Pituitary Gland	Semen (the) essence of all others)

Table 2

Chakra	Prana Vayu	Kosha	Tattwa	Yantra	Tanmatra	Jnanendriya	Karmendriya
Mooladhara	Apana	Annamaya	Prithvi (Earth)	Yellow Square	Smell	Nose	Anus
Swadhisthana	Vyana	Pranamaya	Apas (Water)	Silver or White Crescent Moon	Taste	Tongue	Sex Organs, Kidneys, Urinary System
Manipura	Samana	Pranamaya	Agni (Fire)	Red Inverted Triangle	Sight	Eyes	Feet
Anahata	Prana	Manomaya	Vayu (Air)	Smoky Six-Pointed Star	Touch	Skin	Hands
Vishuddhi	Udana	Vijnanamaya	Akasha (Ether)	White Circle	Hearing	Ears	Vocal Chords
Ajna	All Five	Vijnanamaya	Manas (Mind)	Clear or Grey Circle	Mind	Mind	Mind
Sahasrara	Beyond	Anandamaya	Beyond	Beyond	Beyond	Beyond	Beyond

Table 3

Chakra	Beeja	Loka	Devi	Deva	Animal	Yoni	Lingam	Granthi
Mooladhara	Lam	Bhu	Savitri or Dakini	Ganesha	Elephant (Airavata)	Tripura	Swayambhu	Brahma
Swadhisthana	Vam	Bhuvah	Saraswati or Rakini	Vishnu	Crocodile (Makara)		Dhumra	
Manipura	Ram	Swaha	Lakshmi or Lakini	Rudra	Ram			
Anahata	Yam	Maha	Kali or Kakini	Isha	Antelope	Trikona	Bana	Vishnu
Vishuddhi	Ham	Janaha	Sakini	Sadashiva	White Elephant			
Ajna	Om	Tapaha	Hakini	Paramshiva		Trikona	Itarakhya	Rudra
Sahasrara		Satyam	Shakti	Shiva				Jyotir

Table 4		
Chakra	**Psychic Experience**	**Associated Powers**
Mooladhara	Inverted red triangle with coiled serpent	Full knowledge of kundalini and the power to awaken it. Levitation, control of body, breath and mind; ability to produce any smell for one self or others; ever free from disease, cheerful and full of gladness.
Swadhisthana	Total darkness, unconsciousness	No fear of water, intuitional knowledge, knowledge of astral entities, power of tasting anything desired for oneself and others.
Manipura	Bright yellow lotus	Acquisition of hidden treasure, no fear of fire, knowledge of one's own body, freedom from disease, withdrawal of energy to sahasrara.
Anahata	Blue lotus upon a lake of stillness; golden flame in a dark cave	Control of prana and ability to heal others, cosmic love, inspired speech, gift of poetry, words bear fruit, intense concentration and complete control of the senses.
Vishuddhi	Feeling of cold and drops of nectar	Imperishability; full knowledge of the Vedas; knowledge of past, present, future; ability to exist without eating; power to read others' thoughts.
Ajna	Golden egg and spontaneous trance (unmani)	Able to enter another's body at will; becomes all-knowing and all-seeing; acquisition of all siddhis; realization of unity with Brahman (supreme consciousness).
Sahasrara	Luminous lingam surrounded by bright red or multicoloured lotus of infinite petals	Samadhi, total awakening, self-realization.

Glossary

Adwaita – non-dual; the concept of oneness.

Agni – fire.

Ajapa japa – meditational practice in which mantra is repeated in coordination with the ingoing and outgoing breath.

Ajna chakra – the psychic command centre situatedin the midbrain.

Akasha – ethereal space, e.g. the inner space before the forehead known as chidakasha, the heart space known as hridayakasha, and the ether of outer space known as mahakasha.

Amaroli – yogic tantric practice in which the urine is used either internally or externally for mental and physical health.

Amrit – psychic nectar which is secreted in bindu and drops from lalana chakra to vishuddhi chakra, causing a feeling of blissful intoxication.

Amygdala – small area of grey matter in the temporal lobe, part of the limbic system.

Anahata chakra – the psychic centre related to the region of the heart.

Anandamaya kosha – blissful transcendental dimension; personal and collective unconscious.

Annamaya kosha – the physical body or level of existence; the conscious aspect.

Aorta – largest artery of the body, which takes oxygenated blood from the heart for distribution throughout the body.

Apana – vital energy in the lower part of the body, below the navel.

Asana – a steady and comfortable position of the body.

Ashram – yogic community where the inmates live and work under the guidance of a guru.

Astral body – the subtle, psychic body; finer than the physical body.

Atman – the pure self, beyond body and mind.

Atma shakti – spiritual force.

Aushadhi – awakening of spiritual power through the use of herbs or plant preparations.

Autogenic training – psychotherapy that works with the body and mind simultaneously; learning to manipulate the bodily functions through the mind.

Avatara – divine incarnation.

Avidya – ignorance.

Awareness – the faculty of conscious knowing.

Ballistocardiograph – machine which measures small body motions accompanying the movement of blood through the circulatory system.

Bandha – psychomuscular energy lock which redirects the flow of psychic energy in the body.

Beeja mantra – seed sound; a basic mantra or vibration which has its origin in trance consciousness.

Bhajan – devotional song.

Bhakta – one who follows the path of bhakti yoga.

Bhakti yoga – the yoga of devotion.

Bhrumadhya – the eyebrow centre; kshetram or contact point for ajna chakra.

Bindu – the psychic centre situated at the top back of the head; a point or drop which is the substratum of the whole cosmos, the seat of total creation.

Brahma – the divine spirit, Hindu god; creator of the universe.

Brahmacharya – control and redirection of sexual energy towards spiritual awakening.

Brahma granthi – knot of creation. Psychomuscular knot in the perineum which must be released for kundalini to enter and ascend through sushumna nadi. It symbolizes the blockage posed by material and sensual attachment.

Brahmamuhurta – the time between 4 and 6 a.m. This is the sattwic time of day, best suited to yogic sadhana.

Brahma nadi – the most subtle pranic flow within the sushumna nadi.

Brahmin – a member of the priestly caste.

Buddhi – the higher intelligence, concerned with real wisdom; the faculty of valuing things for the advancement of life and conscious awareness.

Causal body – the body you experience in deep sleep and in certain types of samadhi.

Central canal – the hollow passage within the spinal cord. In the subtle body, this is the path of sushumna nadi.

Cerebral cortex – grey matter on the surface of the brain responsible for higher mental function.

Cerebrospinal fluid – (CSF) cushion of fluid protecting the brain and spinal cord.

Cervical plexus – autonomic nerve plexus in the neck associated with vishuddhi chakra.

Cervix – the circular opening leading into the womb; seat of mooladhara chakra in the female body.

Chakra – literally 'wheel' or 'vortex'; major psychic centre in the subtle body, responsible for specific physiological and psychic functions.

Chela – disciple.

Chitta – mind; conscious, subconscious and unconscious levels of the brain.

Cingulate gyrus – a convolution of the brain, part of the limbic system.

Coccygeal plexus – small nerve plexus at the base of the spine behind the pelvic cavity, related to swadhisthana chakra.

Consciousness – the medium of universal and individual awareness.

Corpus callosum – fibres connecting the two hemispheres of the brain.

Deity – a form of divinity, a divine being having subordinate functions.

Devata – divine power.

Devi – a goddess; a manifestation of Shakti.

Dharana – concentration; continuity of mental process on one object or idea without leaving it.

Dharma – duty; code of harmonious living; spiritual path.

Dhumra lingam – smoky (obscured) lingam; the symbol of Shiva as manifest in mooladhara chakra.

Dhyana – meditation, in the sense of intense meditation for an extended period of time.

Diksha – initiation into spiritual life by a guru.

Dopamine – chemical involved in the excitatory systems of the brain.

Durga – Hindu goddess; a personification of Shakti, pictured riding upon a tiger, to whom personal ambition is rendered.

Dwaita – the philosophy of dualism in which man and God are considered to be separated.

ECG – electrocardiogram. Tracing of electric current produced by the heart.

EEG – electroencephalogram. Recording of electric current produced by nerve cells in the brain.

EMG – electromyography. Recording of electrical properties of muscles.

Epiglottis – flap of cartilage at the back of the throat which integrates the swallowing and breathing processes.

Frontal lobe – anterior portion of the brain containing the motor area.

Ganga – the river Ganges, the longest and most sacred river in India.

Gauss – measurement of intensity of a magnetic field.

Granthis – the three psychic knots on the sushumna nadi which hinder the upward passage of kundalini – brahma granthi, vishnu granthi and rudra granthi.

Gunas – the three qualities or matter of prakriti – tamas, rajas and sattwa.

Guru – literally, 'dispeller of darkness', the spiritual master or teacher.

Guru chakra – another name for ajna chakra, the eye of intuition; through which the inner guru's guidance manifests.

Hatha yoga – a system of yoga which specially deals with practices for bodily purification.

Hippocampus – an elevation on the floor of the lateral ventricle, part of the limbic system.

Hiranyagarbha – the golden egg; womb of consciousness, the seat of supreme awareness in the crown of the head; known as sahasrara chakra.

Hridayakasha – the etheric space visualized within the heart; the heart space.

Hypometabolic state – state of lowered metabolism, for example, decrease in respiratory, circulatory and secretory rates.

Hypothalamus – portion of the brain that integrates temperature, sleep, food intake, development of sexual characteristics and endocrine activity.

Ida – major psychic channel which conducts manas shakti, mental energy, located on the left side of the psychic body; the 'tha' of hatha yoga.

Indriyas – sense organs.

Ishta devata – one's personal symbol, form or vision of God.

Itarakhya lingam – symbol of Shiva in ajna chakra.

Jalandhara bandha – chin lock. It compresses the prana in the trunk of the body and thereby helps to control psychic energy.

Japa – repetition of a mantra until it becomes the spontaneous form of your conscious awareness.

Jivanmukta – liberated soul, one who has attained selfrealization or moksha.

Jivatma – the individual soul

Jnana yoga – path of yoga concerned directly with knowledge, self-awareness.

Jnanendriyas – the organs of knowledge or sensory organs such eyes, ears, skin, etc.

Jyotir lingam – the symbol of Shiva in sahasrara chakra. This lingam is of pure white light, symbolizing illumined astral consciousness.

Kabbalah – text dealing with the esoteric mysticism of the Judaic religion.

Kali – form of Shakti who arouses terror and fear, destroyer of ignorance in her devotees.

Karma – actions, work, the inherent subconscious imprints which make a person act.

Karma yoga – action performed unselfishly, for the welfare of others and the fulfilment of dharma.

Karmendriyas – organs of action, e.g. feet, hands, vocal chords, anus, sexual organs, etc.

Kevala kumbhaka – spontaneous breath retention.

Khechari mudra – mudra of hatha yoga and tantra, in which the tongue passes back into the pharynx to stimulate the flow of amrit from lalana chakra, activating vishuddhi.

Kirtan – repetition of mantras set to music.

Koshas – sheaths or bodies.

Kshetram – contact centres or trigger points for the chakras, located in the front of the body.

Kumbhaka – breath retention.

Kurma nadi – (tortoise nadi) associated with vishuddhi chakra. Its control brings the ability to live without physical sustenance.

Lalana chakra – minor chakra in the region of the back wall of the pharynx, where amrit is stored from bindu and released to vishuddhi.

Limbic system – group of structures in the brain associated with certain aspects of emotion and behaviour.

Lingam – symbol representing Lord Shiva; the male aspect of creation; symbol of the astral body.

Loka – world, dimension or plane of existence or consciousness.

Lord Shiva – archetypal renunciate and yogi who dwells in meditation high in the Himalayas; Hindu god; destroyer of the universe.

Madya – wine; also refers to spiritual intoxication resulting from drinking the nectar of immortality, amrit.

Mahakala – great or endless time.

Mahatma – great soul.

Maithuna – literally 'sacrifice', sexual union with a spiritual purpose.

Mala – a rosary-like string of beads used in meditational practices.

Manas – one aspect of mind; the mental faculty of comparing, classifying and reasoning.

Manas shakti – mental force.

Mandala – tantric diagram used for meditation.

Manic depression – psychosis marked by severe mood swings.

Manomaya kosha – mental dimension; conscious and subconscious aspects.

Mantra – a sound or a series of sounds having physical, psychic or spiritual potency when recited in a certain prescribed manner.

Marga – path.

Matra – unit of measurement.

Maya – principle of illusion.

Moksha – liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.

Moola bandha – practice of stimulating mooladhara chakra for the awakening of kundalini. It is practised by contracting the perineum in males, or the cervix in females.

Mudra – a psychic attitude often expressed by a physical gesture, movement or posture, which affects the flow of psychic energy in the body.

Nada – sound, especially inner sound.

Nada yoga – the yoga of subtle sound.

Nadis – psychic channels for the distribution of prana in the astral body.

Neti – cleansing technique in which warm saline water is passed through the nasal passages; one of the shatkarmas.

Nirvana – enlightenment, samadhi; harmony between the individual consciousness and the universal consciousness.

Nivritti marga – the path leading back in towards the source from which we have first come.

Nuclear fission – the process of extracting energy from matter by splitting the atom.

Om – the underlying sound of creation; the mantra from which all others have originated.

Paranoia – chronic mental disorder characterized by delusions or hallucinations.

Parasympathetic nervous system – division of the autonomic (involuntary) nervous system concerned with restorative processes and relaxation of the body and mind.

Pashu – the instinctual or animal aspect of man's nature.

Pineal gland – small pinecone shaped endocrine gland in the midbrain directly behind the eyebrow centre; the physical correlate of ajna chakra.

Pingala – the conductor and channel of prana shakti or vital force, located on the right side of the psychic body; the 'ha' of hatha yoga.

Prakriti – the basic substance or principle of the entire phenomenal or manifest world, composed of the three gunas (triguna) or attributes.

Prana – the life force in the body; bioenergy in general; the vital energy which operates in the region of the heart and lungs; the psychic equivalent of the physical breath.

Pranamaya kosha – energy dimension; conscious aspect.

Prana shakti – pranic or vital force.

Pranayama – yogic practice of manipulating and controlling the flow of prana in the subtle body by controlling the respiratory process.

Pranotthana – the impulses which pass up sushumna nadi to the higher centres of the brain when a chakra is transiently aroused. These impulses purify the sushumna passage in preparation for sustained kundalini awakening.

Pravritti marga – the path of expansion outwards into greater and greater manifestation, further away from the source of our origin.

Psi – psychic phenomena.

Psyche – the total mental aspect of man.

Psychosis – major mental disorder characterized by loss of contact with reality.

Purusha – consciousness; the spirit or pure self.

Raja yoga – eightfold path of yoga formulated by Patanjali. It begins with mental stability and proceeds to the highest state of samadhi.

Rajo guna – the guna of prakriti characterized by restlessness, activity and ambition.

Rakshasa – demon; negative or self-defeating force.

Reticular activating system (**RAS**) – that part of the brainstem especially concerned with arousal from sleep and maintenance of the alert, waking state of consciousness.

Rishi – seer or sage; who realizes the truth directly.

Rolfing – structural integration. Deep massage to rebalance the body structures.

Rudra granthi – (also known as Shiva granthi) the knot of Shiva. This is the psychic knot within ajna chakra, which symbolizes attachment to siddhis or higher mental attributes which must be transcended before full awakening of kundalini can occur.

Sacral plexus – nerve plexus in the back wall of the pelvis associated with swadhisthana and mooladhara chakras, and responsible for the functioning of the urinary and reproductive systems.

Sadhaka – a student of spiritual practices.

Sadhana – spiritual discipline or practice.

Sahajoli – the form of vajroli mudra practised by women; contraction of the urethra sphincter muscle.

Sahasrara – the thousand-petalled lotus or chakra manifesting at the top of the head; the highest psychic centre; the threshold between psychic and spiritual realms which contains all the chakras below it.

Samadhi – state of being above mortal existence; allknowing and all-pervading state of being; the fulfilment of meditation; state of union with the object of meditation and the universal consciousness.

Samana – vital energy operating in the region of the navel.

Samkhya – the ancient scientific philosophy of India which classifies all that is known without reference to an external power (God).

Samskara – past mental impression; archetype.

Sandhya – ritual worship conducted at dawn, at noon and evening.

Sangha – associations, company, acquaintances.

Sankalpa – spiritual resolve.

Sankalpa shakti – the power of will.

Sannyasa – total renunciation, perfect dedication.

Satsang – spiritual instruction, discussion and guidance from an illumined being or guru.

Sattwa – one of the three gunas of prakriti; the pure or equilibrated state of mind or nature.

Saundarya Lahari – tantric prayer of Adi Shankaracharya.

Schizophrenia – a severe mental/emotional disturbance characterized by hallucinations and disconnection between thought, feelings and actions.

Schumann resonance – magnetic resonance of the earth – 7 cycles/second.

Shabda – sound or word; the materially creative principle.

Shaivism – philosophy of Shiva worship, perhaps the most ancient faith in the world.

Shakti – power, energy; the feminine aspect of creation; the force expressed through all manifested phenomena.

Shambhavi mudra – mudra named after Shambhu (Shiva); focusing the eyes on bhrumadhya.

Shankhaprakshalana – a method of cleansing the entire alimentary canal.

Shanti – peace.

Shastras – scriptures.

Shatkarmas – the six cleansing techniques of hatha yoga.

Shivalingam – oval-shaped stone which is the symbol of Shiva, consciousness or the astral body.

Shoonya, **shoonyata** – the state of absolute nothingness or void; mental vacuum.

Shuddhi – purification.

Siddha – adept, yogi; one who has control over nature, matter and the mind.

Siddhi – perfection; one of the eight occult powers; a psychic power associated with awakening of chakra functions.

Solar plexus – intersection of a group of nerves in the abdominal region; the physical manifestation of manipura.

Soma – amrit; a plant used by the rishis of ancient India for the purpose of spiritual awakening and immortality.

Sushumna nadi – the most important psychic passageway. It flows in the central canal within the spinal cord.

Swadhisthana chakra – the psychic centre corresponding to the coccyx or pubic region.

Swami – literally 'one who is master of his own mind'; sannyasin disciple initiated into sannyasa by a guru; one who has renounced mundane experiences as goals in life.

Swara yoga – the science of the breath cycle.

Swayambhu – self-created.

Sympathetic nervous system – the division of the autonomic (involuntary) nervous system responsible for maintaining physical activity of the organs and expenditure of energy.

Tamas – darkness; inertia; one of the three gunas of prakriti.

Tanmatra – the sense activities – sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell, and also inner intuitive perception via the subtle organ of mind, which is the sixth sense.

Tantra – the ancient science which uses specific techniques to expand and liberate the consciousness from its limitations.

Tantra shastra – scriptures of the tantric tradition devoted to spiritual techniques, in the form of a dialogue between Shiva and Shakti. These texts outline a code of living which includes ritual, worship, discipline, meditation and the attainment of powers.

Tapasya – the practice of austerity; conditioning of the body for the removal of impurities and for

overcoming the deficiencies and weaknesses of the body, mind and senses.

Tattwa – elemental nature or quality, e.g. fire, water, air, earth, ether.

Thalamus – area in the brain which receives most sensory stimuli and integrates most incoming and outgoing information. Also the centre for appreciation of pain, touch and temperature.

Trataka – the meditational or hatha yoga technique which involves steadily gazing at an object.

Trishula – trident; three pronged implement held by Lord Shiva and carried by many holy men and renunciates. The three prongs symbolize the three main nadis.

Udana – the vital energy operating above the throat.

Uddiyana bandha – literally 'flying upward'; a yogic practice of pranic manipulation utilizing the abdominal muscles and organs.

Vairagya – non-attachment; state where one is calm and tranquil in the midst of the tumultuous events of the world.

Vajra nadi – the nadi which connects the expression of sexual energy with the brain and is concerned with the flow of ojas, the highest form of energy in the human body which is concentrated in the semen.

Vajroli mudra – contraction of vajra nadi; contraction of urethra sphincter muscle in men.

Vasana – the desires that are the driving force behind every thought and action in life.

Vayu – air.

Vedanta – the ultimate philosophy of the Vedas.

Vedas – the oldest known religious texts of the Aryans, written more than 5000 years ago.

Ventricles – cavities in the brain where the CSF is formed.

Vijnanamaya kosha – intuitive or astral dimension; subconscious and unconscious aspects.

Vishnu – Hindu god; preserver of the universe.

Vishuddhi chakra – the psychic centre located in the throat region.

Vritti – a modification arising in consciousness, likened to the circular wave pattern emanating when a stone is dropped into a still pool of water.

Vyana – vital energy which pervades the whole body.

Yantra – a symbolic design used for concentration and meditation; the visual form of a mantra.

Yoga – union; the methods and practices leading to union of individual human consciousness with the divine principle or cosmic consciousness.

Yoga nidra – psychic sleep; a yogic practice in which one can raise oneself from the mundane state of body consciousness.

Yoga Sutras – text written by Patanjali, delineating the eightfold path of raja yoga, the systematic path of meditation which culminates in the samadhi experience.

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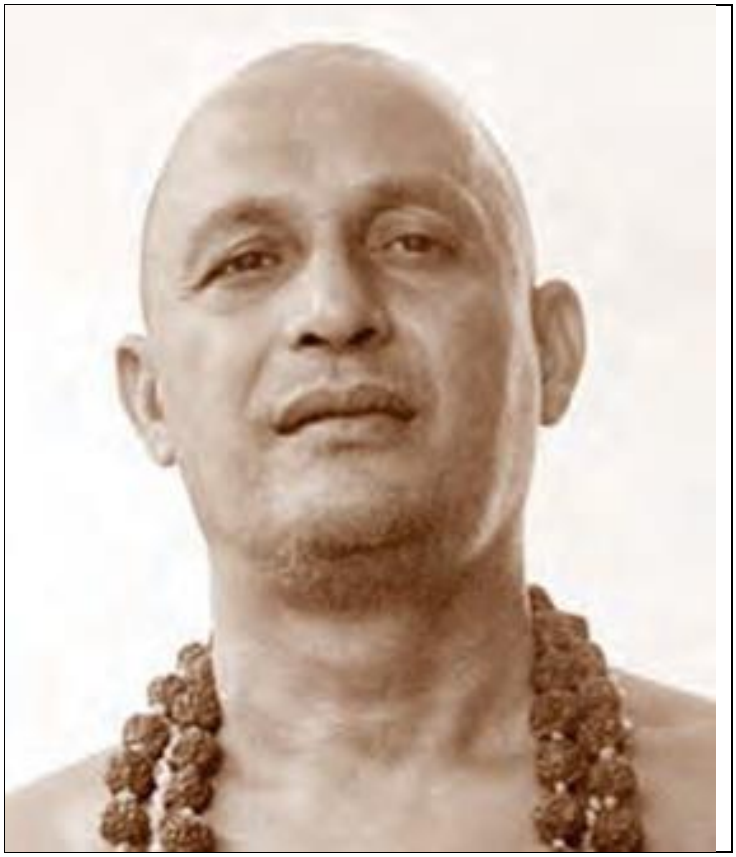

Swami Satyananda was born in Almora (Uttaranchal) in 1923. Drawn to spiritual life from an early age, he left home at the age of eighteen, and in 1943 surrendered himself to Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh who initiated him into Dashnami sannyasa in 1947. He served his guru for twelve years, perfecting every aspect of spiritual life. Thereafter, he travelled throughout the Indian subcontinent as a wandering ascetic. Realizing the need of the times as scientific rendition of the ancient system of yoga, he founded the International Yoga Fellowship in 1956 and the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963. During the next twenty years, Swami Satyananda hoisted the flag of yoga in every corner of the world, consolidated BSY into a foremost institution of yoga, and authored over eighty major texts on yoga, tantra and spiritual life.

'Satyananda Yoga' became a tradition which combines classical knowledge with experiential understanding and a modern outlook. In 1984 he founded the Yoga Research Foundation to synchronize scientific research and yoga, and Sivananda Math to assist the underprivileged. In 1988, at the peak of his achievements, he renounced everything and adopted kshetra sannyasa, living as a paramahamsa ascetic. In 1989 Rikhia was revealed to him, where he came to live and performed higher vedic sadhanas in seclusion. Receiving the command to provide for his neighbours in 1991, he allowed the ashram to help the underprivileged villages in the region. From 1995 onwards, he performed a twelve-year Rajasooya Yajna with the sankalpa of peace, plenty and prosperity for all, and in 2007 he announced the establishment of Rikhiapeeth with its mandate to 'serve, love, give'.

Swami Satyananda attained mahasamadhi, a yogic accomplishment of discarding the body at will to become one with the universal consciousness, in 2009, in the presence of his disciples.

Kundalini Tantra is Swami Satyananda Saraswati's seminal work on kundalini, chakras and kriya yoga. Defining and explaining kundalini, this book provides a detailed account of kundalini awakening, including the signs and effects of such experiences and ways to both elicit and manage them.

The book contains a comprehensive description of each chakra and the significance of the chakras in tantric and yogic practice. Techniques are given to balance each centre for greater harmony in mind, body and spirit, and in preparation for the rising of kundalini shakti.The 20 kriyas and their preparatory practices are fully elucidated.

Includes colour plates, diagrams and charts.

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